









THE BRIDGE-FIEND

A Book of Consolation for Incurables.





“THE LADIES DEARLY LOVE THEIR HEATED LITTLE POST-MORTEMS”

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

12

A CHEERFUL BOOK FOR BRIDGE-WHISTERS

BY

ARTHUR LORING BRUCE

pseud.

Francis W. Crowninshield



NEW YORK

MOFFAT, YARD AND COMPANY

1909

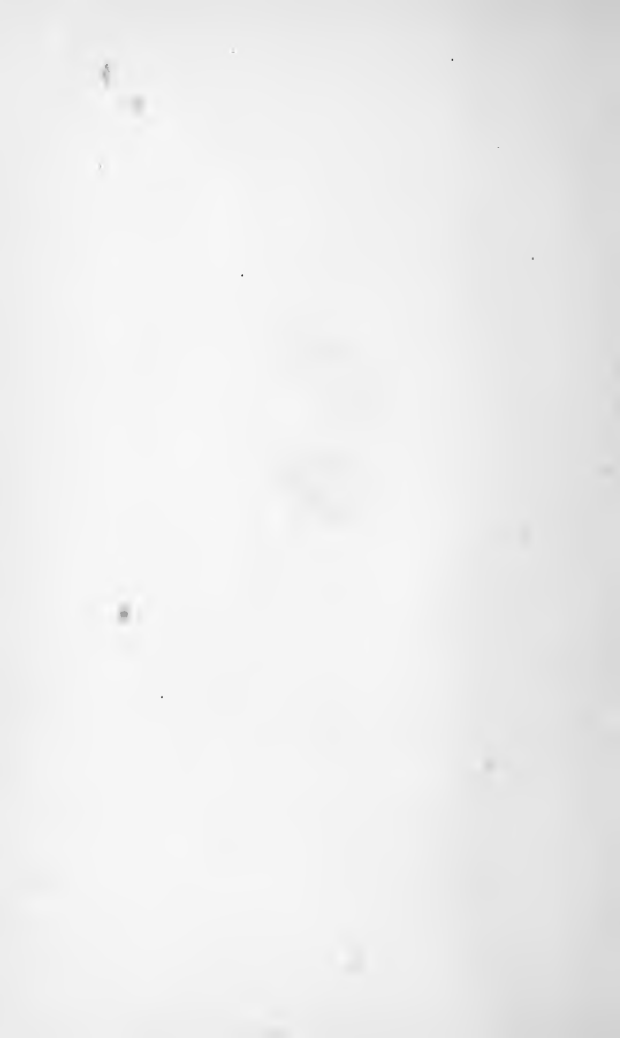
© Cl. A 251459

TO MISS N. I.

SOMEWHERE, lurking in the underbrush of this sportive volume (and trembling and chattering with fear lest you should discover its hiding-place) there is a cruel and murderous sentiment, hateful in the sight of him who wrote it down. I was made to intimate, by some demon of perversity, perhaps, that an absolutely perfect bridge partner had never-existed. Such creatures—so runs the calumny—are, unhappily, extinct upon our troubled planet: they are purely mythical, like the angels or the minotaurs. For this falsehood I humbly crave your pardon.

To you, then, perfect partner—mythical only in so far as you partake of the nature of the angels—I dedicate this little bundle of bridge memories.

A. L. B.



FOREWARNING

To the confirmed addict a cheerful book on bridge needs no apology. The sixty or seventy existing works on the game are so technical, truthful and forbidding that the author hopes to see this carefree volume — because of its levity and partial untruthfulness — hailed by every incurable, as a very present help in case of a double. Its purpose is not to instruct but to distract. Nowhere, for instance, in the following pages, will there be found those most spirit-blighting of earthly words, “The penalty for a revoke is three tricks torn from the screaming and revoking player.” I take a certain pride, also, in stating that, for the first time since the invention of the game, that baneful and bitter “Table of Correct Leads” has been blackballed and excluded from a work on bridge.

To all bridge players — whether incipient, chronic, violent or incurable — this volume ought to bring consolation and relief.

With its aid, wild and ferocious partners

FOREWARNING

may be subdued; cheats may be detected and out-cheated; feminine "bridgers" may be made almost honest, and "post-mortems" entirely done away with. A single perusal of its magic pages will infallibly produce — in even the most savage player — a feeling of serenity, gratitude and calm.

I feel that my apologies are due my readers for the disjointed character of the work, and for the maturity of some of my anecdotes.

My thanks are due to Messrs. Street & Smith by whose disinterested kindness and courtesy I am permitted to reprint as much of the volume as appeared, originally, in the pages of "Ainslee's Magazine."

My thanks are also due to my friends, R. F. Foster, C. S. Street and R. G. Badger for many kindnesses and benefits bestowed and to Louis Fancher, who, notwithstanding his bitter and unreasonable hatred of the noble game of bridge, finally consented to design for me the cover and frontispiece of this little book.

A. L. B.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
FOREWARNING	ix
FIRST APPEARANCES OF THE DEVASTATING PLAGUE	1
WILD PARTNERS I HAVE MET	12
A FEW CHEERING ANECDOTES	39
THE MATTER OF GAINS — AND LOSSES	54
IN GAY PAREE	76
CLEVER CHEATS AND CHEATING	94
MORE OR LESS SERIOUS — AND HISTORICAL	118
THE LADIES — ANGELIC AND OTHERWISE	142
THE HATEFUL PROCESS OF DISGORING	160
ROYAL AND ARISTOCRATIC BRIDGERS	169
TRAGEDIES, SURPRISES AND HORRORS	181
A TEST HAND — USEFUL IN DISCOURAGING THE BOASTERS	194
GIRLS	207
SUCCESS WITH BAD PARTNERS	218

CONTENTS

	PAGE
BRIDGE IN ENGLAND	230
A TANGLE OF YARNS	249
IN SOCIETY	264

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

CHAPTER I

FIRST APPEARANCES OF THE DEVASTATING PLAGUE

DURING the past few years I have been amazed at the spread of bridge in America; not only in the principal cities, but in the smallest villages and towns as well. In the last six months I have seen listed on booksellers' catalogues over sixty books treating of the game. This is a considerable mass of literature when it is remembered that sixteen years ago the game was unknown in this country or in England.

I wonder how many of my readers know anything of the origin of bridge? I may say that I have found it almost impossible to secure correct information about the early history of the game, but, after reading many

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

forbiddingly dry treatises on the subject, I lean to the opinion that it originated in Turkey. Russia and Greece have both claimed it, but I think it more than likely that the Turks were the first people to play it.

In Russia it is called "biritch," but just why, nobody seems to know. There is no such word as *biritch* in the Russian language, so that many are of the opinion that the word is a roundabout corruption of some word in use in Turkey.

Just as Persia was, they say, the first home of poker, so, I am disposed to think, was Constantinople the birthplace of bridge — a conclusion which any one who has ever played the game with a Turk will be inclined to share, for the Turks have a really marvelous genius for the game. I feel sure that the average Turk has about twenty per cent. more insight into cards and card-games than the average Englishman or American.

In Turkey and, indeed, throughout the East, cards are played with a quickness and brilliancy that are rarely met with elsewhere. Americans have always regarded poker as the one game of cards in which lying, joking,

FIRST APPEARANCES

bluffing and petty deceptions are not only permissible, but amusing. Were we to practice the same tactics in playing bridge, our adversaries would certainly consider us sharp, and, probably, dishonest. Now the Easterners play bridge exactly as we play poker. They study a man's eyes; the twitching of his hands; his hesitation, and all the little personal signs that might give information as to the contents of his hand. I have heard many Europeans say that they did not like to play bridge with Easterners because of these trying little peculiarities.

I remember a particularly sad case of a Turkish diplomat in Washington who came to this country and played most brilliant bridge. He had, however, a provoking habit of looking you steadily in the eye; talking, in an exaggerated way, about the value of his hand; studying the way you sorted your cards and being a little too keen about the score and the play of the hand. This gentleman went to Newport, and his system of play roused a good deal of gossip there, until finally he was branded as a cheat, when, as a matter of fact, he was merely playing

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

bridge as it was universally played in his native land and precisely as we play poker in America. He shortly afterward left America and has never appeared here since.

It was, I learn, during the year 1894 that bridge was introduced into London by Lord Brougham, who brought the game back with him from an extended foreign tour.

Lord Brougham's account of the event is curious and interesting. Soon after his return to London he went into the Portland Club, which is probably the best-known card-club in the world. The Portland at that time was given over exclusively to old-fashioned whist. His lordship sat down to play a friendly rubber and, when it came his turn to deal, forgot to expose the trump. At his next deal he again forgot to turn the last card. His friends, who had known him for years, made a mental memorandum that his lordship was beginning to lose his memory. He explained his carelessness by saying that he had been playing so much "bridge" that he could never remember the exasperating convention of turning the trump. This re-

FIRST APPEARANCES

mark led to his explaining the game in detail to his friends.

From this insignificant beginning bridge has spread and spread until it is now the most popular card-game in the world. There is to-day hardly any "straight" whist played at the Portland; bridge has entirely replaced it. The Turf was the second English club to experiment with the game, and from that time on the fever spread through the English clubs very rapidly.

In 1895 the Portland issued its famous "Laws of Bridge." This was translated and adopted as the standard guide to the game in most of the cities of Europe and even in Constantinople, the city of its reputed birth.

I believe that there is good ground for the assertion that America was introduced to bridge before England, for it is certain that the late Henry I. Barbey explained the game to his friends at the Whist Club in New York as early as the beginning of 1894, probably a month or two before Lord Brougham explained it at the Portland.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

A little later in the year Mr. Barbey had arranged an incomplete little table of rules and conventions of the game, which he published for private circulation, and, in 1897, the game had so far grown in favor at the Whist Club that it issued the first complete code of bridge laws to be published in this country.

The late Henry Jones, popularly known as "Cavendish," who was probably the master mind of whist in England and who has done more than any one man for that game (with the possible exception of Hoyle) was, at first, bitterly opposed to bridge. He poked all manner of fun at the game. He said it was ridiculously simple and a bore; but, before his death, in 1899, he was completely converted to it and ended by saying that there was "no game of cards in the world wherein skill, sound judgment and insight into the adversary's methods will meet with more certain reward than they will in bridge."

"Cavendish" explained the difference between the two games as follows: A new mode of deciding the trump; the varying

FIRST APPEARANCES

value of the tricks and honors; the right to double and redouble the value of tricks; playing a third hand as dummy; a new system of scoring; the addition of a fifth honor.

In America, bridge has made giant strides. It has invaded, seemingly, every grade of society, and has, like a devastating fever, laid low the rich and the poor, the believer and the skeptic, the proud and the humble. In Washington, the throne of empire has itself been threatened. The President has even gone so far as to say cruel and dreadful things about the game. Not so the Secretary of the Navy, however, for Mr. Meyer is an expert and enthusiastic devotee of the game. He is, indeed, an international player, and, in Russia, Italy and England, his game has been for years the subject of enthusiastic comment by the natives. Indeed, his name has become linked with the game, in a manner which, though trivial, threatens to become permanent. This fact is worth a word or two of comment in passing.

A favorite play of the Secretary's, and one which he is always certain to indulge in if the opportunity offers itself, is to play, let us

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

say, a queen up to an ace, jack, in dummy, and "let it ride." This, to his opponents, looks like a pretty trap set against the king, while, as a matter of fact, the king is all the while safely tucked away in the secretary's hand.

This play, or any similar play — like the jack up to ace, king — while the queen is in the player's hand — has become generally known as a "George Meyer finesse," and the term threatens to become as universal as, let us say, the term "Yarborough" for a hand without an honor, or as the word "doubleton" to denote a lead from a two-card suit.

I may add that the fever of bridge in America has just about reached its height and I am curious to see if there will be a gradual diminution of interest in the game. Ping-pong lasted a year, diabolo two, bicycling five; bridge has lasted fifteen. How much longer will it endure? It is worth mentioning, in this connection, that straight whist has survived two centuries, only to be jostled, if not totally displaced, by bridge.

Nearly two hundred years ago Lady Mary Wortley Montague wrote to a friend from

FIRST APPEARANCES

Bath, where she had gone to take the waters — presumably for spleen:

I am bored to death. I hear nothing but the eternal questions, "What's trumps? Who's to play?"

The whist fever did devastating work during all of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in England. Indeed, it must have been more prevalent in English society than bridge is at the present time in America, if such a thing were possible.

I have heard many people say that bridge has killed the pleasures of society. The formality, punctilio and chivalry of it have, they claim, been swept away by this pestiferous game.

With all the emphasis and eloquence of which I am capable, I rise to say: "No! Ten thousand times no!"

Reader, can you remember the formal and gloomy dinners in New York about fifteen years ago before bridge had come to bless and brighten them? Do you recall the agonized hours you spent at them? What terrible things they were! Twenty ladies

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

in tiaras; twenty gentlemen in stiff, straight, high collars. Course after course of disguised food products; then the gossip among the ladies and the long, black cigars among the men; the taxing talk about stocks, golf and politics. Then — most terrible of all — the meeting of the sexes in that stiff and impressively formal drawing-room; the chandeliers blazing, the heat incredible; the boredom insupportable; those awful Louis Quinze chairs; those forced tête-à-têtes and that general atmosphere of constraint and formality until the carriages were called and the lights extinguished. Can you say that bridge is a social curse, after remembering the torture of those solemn gatherings?

Now, thank Heaven, the picture has been changed. Small dinners — eight or ten — a very few good things to eat, turnover collars, liqueurs with the ladies, and bridge and chatter and laughter and comfortable chairs and cigarettes and — best of all — go home when you want to.

This is, to be sure, the point of view of a player. For a non-bridger I can imagine nothing more maddening than the social

FIRST APPEARANCES

tyranny of bridge. My advice to the man who dines out in New York and cannot or will not play bridge is — suicide! A few of these forlorn and melancholy spirits still grace the dinner-tables of the rich but their lot is worm-wood and their sufferings must be excruciating. They are pariahs at best — lost souls, supernumeraries.

Take bridge away from New York society and it will become — what? An “Elsie” book, without Elsie!

CHAPTER II

WILD PARTNERS I HAVE MET

AN international card-player was once asked, in his club, if he could name an ideal partner at bridge. For a long time he went over in his mind the endless procession of men whom he had played with in the smoky club card-room and finally answered:

"No! There isn't such a thing. An ideal partner, one without hateful mannerisms and annoying idiosyncrasies, is, like perpetual motion or the limit of space, inconceivable. There is not a known specimen in the British Museum in London or in the Smithsonian Institute at Washington."

A peppery, red-faced old gentleman, who was reading a racing-guide in the corner of the library and smoking a long, black cigar, was then appealed to. His face assumed an added crimson when the question was propounded to him.

WILD PARTNERS

"Yes," he said, after a pause, "I knew *one* in Bombay. Stop a minute, though; I remember now that he had a damnable habit of whistling whenever he played a winning hand."

A youngish gentleman (sallow and callow) declared that he didn't know much about it, but if there *were* such a freak of nature he was absolutely certain that it *wasn't* a woman.

A fashionable, globe-trotting bachelor, who, while the discussion had been raging, had sat twirling his mustache, drew up his chair to the self-appointed cross-examiner, lighted a cigarette, asked the waiter to "take the orders," and mildly tried to stem the tide.

"If you will excuse me," he went on, "I must beg to differ with all of you; particularly with Reggie here, who has dared to animadvert against a large body of defenseless and, in some cases, guiltless women. As a matter of fact, I have played bridge in nearly every country of the civilized world and I have met with only three perfect, irreproachable and immaculate partners in my entire life — and *all* of them were women."

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Incredulity was written large on the faces of the jury.

“As nobody asks me to explain and as you all seem to be absolutely averse to listening further, I shall, all uninvited, continue with my narrative,” said the man of fashion — “and at some length.”

“When I was secretary in Spain I chanced to be a good deal in Barcelona and played a lot of bridge at a charming club on the Rambla, that most delightful of all the world’s thoroughfares. One afternoon I had an altercation with two gentlemen in the card-room. They were quarrelsome and boorish men at best. I could not help wondering why it was that all partners at bridge were so tiresomely irritating. I paid up my losses, determined never to play bridge with them again, took a drink of heavy Spanish wine, and went to my rooms to change my things for dinner. When I had bathed and finished dressing, I found that I had ten minutes’ leeway before leaving for my dinner at Señor G’s. It was early springtime and I determined to idle about on the streets until it was time for my carriage to arrive.

WILD PARTNERS

“ When I reached the Rambla I was fairly transported by the beauty of the scene. The lights, the pretty women, the enchanting costumes of the ladies, the odor of the restaurants, the fresh green leaves on the trees, the soothing effect of my bath, the fragrant window-boxes of flowers and the soft southern air all helped to make me serenely happy. I sat down on a bench and lighted a cigarette. All was fairy-land, brightness, youth and dreamful ease.

“ I soon fell — very naturally — to pondering upon the beauty of the Spanish women. Imagine, if you can, my surprise when a woman, tall, heavily veiled, and bearing in her arms a mass of yellow roses, sat down on the bench beside me and hesitatingly addressed me in the most perfect French.

“ ‘ Will you,’ she murmured hurriedly and softly, ‘ do me a very great service? Will you come with me in my carriage, do as I wish you to do, ask me no questions, and go when I tell you to go? ’

“ I explained that politeness to my hostess at dinner prompted me to say ‘ No,’ but that

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

the dictates of my heart most certainly prompted me to say 'Yes.'

"Politeness, of course, went by the board and we were soon leaning back in the cushioned brougham. I noticed that we were speeding toward the newer part of the city."

"Is this going to be a very long story?" asked the red-faced gentleman with the racing-guide.

"It *was* to be," said the bachelor, "but I shall take your hint and make it as short as possible. Well, we soon arrived at a deucedly impressive palace and were shown, by an army of servants, into a charming little salon where sat two very beautiful women in décolleté dresses. I was presented to them by my companion, who, when uncloaked and unmantled, stood before me as quite the most glorious being that I had ever beheld.

"One of the ladies was an Aragonese, one was from Valencia and one from Toledo. They were all *grandes dames* and all spoke delightful French. It was only then that my mysterious companion announced the favor which she wished me to grant her. I was to play three rubbers of bridge — one with each

WILD PARTNERS

of the ladies. At the conclusion of the *séance* I was to announce which of them was, in my opinion, the most perfect partner. I was told that a great deal hung on my decision, but what this great deal was I could not possibly divine or fathom.

“ I assented, naturally enough, and played the desired three rubbers. There was absolutely no fault to be found with any of them. The ladies and I *all* kept separate scores — by request of the hostess. They all played rapidly, but not *too* rapidly. They did not hum tunes or tap on the table with their fingers. They made no mistakes. They were never dejected by defeat or elated by victory. They smiled sweetly; they did not go into post-mortems after the hands; they did not complain when I questioned a lead; they were, in short, perfect partners. I felt that there was something uncanny in such perfection, in so much ease and quietude and skill. ‘ Is it,’ I asked myself, ‘ a dream? I shall apply to this situation an infallible reagent — the supreme acid test. I shall know, once and for all, if I am sane or raving. *I shall add up the scores!* If they are correct I shall know, to

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

an absolute certainty, that this is not Spain but fairy-land, for,' I argued, 'it is inconceivable that three women should score three rubbers without a single error — particularly in the honor column. Such a feat is unknown on our planet. I took the score-blocks and, to my amazement and consternation, the scores were all of them absolutely correct.

" 'Ladies,' I cried, arising, 'you are all perfect players and perfect partners. There is nothing to choose between you. I suspect, though, that this is all a base deception, a devilish piece of magic and black art. You are impostors, wizards, furies, harpies, witches!'

At this they all arose, fluttering and crowding about me in their furbelows and laces as if to lay hands upon me. I was aware of the perfume of their bodices and the dim hum of their voices. Finally I was overcome with the absurdity of my position and opened wide my eyes — only to find myself on my bench in the Rambla, ten minutes late for my dinner and surrounded by a group of curious women who had stopped their promenade at the spec-

WILD PARTNERS

tacle of a gentleman in evening clothes asleep on an iron bench in the Rambla.

"Gentlemen, these three ladies were the only perfect bridge partners that I have ever met — or ever expect to meet."

At the conclusion of the bachelor's narrative the rubicund gentleman with the racing-guide hurriedly swallowed his cocktail and flew from the club with traces of indignation blazing on his face. The other listeners contented themselves with picking up their evening papers, and, in absolute silence, glaring at the bachelor with sullen and disapproving eyes.

Let us now go over in our mind all the *bad* partners that we have ever met. The assembly is, naturally, a large one. Rabelais' celebrated list of games is as nothing to it. Homer's catalogue of the ships sinks into pitiful insignificance beside it. For purposes of reference, let us number the better-known types — up to thirty, thus:

(1) The lady who has forgotten her purse, but will surely send you a check to-morrow — if she happens to remember it.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

(2) The telephone fiend who really would not dream of interrupting the rubber, but, "as this is a long distance call, I really ought to see who it is — so you will *please* excuse me, won't you?"

(3) The superstitious man who is constantly calling for fresh cards, or changing his seat, or walking three times around his chair, or placing some magic charm on the table beside him.

(4) The ruminative animal who gazes intently at the ceiling when it is his turn to play, as if seeking inspiration from some invisible Yogi, or else listening to the call of a tuneful bird hidden in the branches of a gigantic tree.

(5) The whistler, hummer, tapper, kicker, swayer and drummer.

(6) The hog who pounces into the seat to the left of the dealer so as to rob his partner of the first deal.

(7) The man who will *never* stop playing. (This gentleman is a positive first cousin to the negative gentleman who always refuses to play more than one rubber.)

(8) The gloomy creature or fatalist who is always pursued by bad luck, who tells you

WILD PARTNERS

heartbreaking things about his poor cards, and remains plunged in despair until the horrible agony is over.

(9) The woman who "perks up" when she has a good hand — laughs, chats and makes merry.

(10) The so-called gentleman who writhes, groans and turns in his chair when his partner leads a card that does not fit in with his particular hand.

(11) The idiot who sprawls on the table and holds his cards so that every one must see them.

(12) The man who always wants to know the score — and his three brothers: The first who insists on looking back at the last trick and examining it carefully as though every card were new to him; the second who always asks the trump; and the third who incessantly wants to know whether or not the trick is against him.

(13) The tea-and-muffin crank who wants to play bridge, tell a story, smoke a cigar, butter a crumpet, read the paper and drink tea at one and the same time — with only one mouth and a single pair of hands.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

(14) The "gifted" player who has never read a book on bridge, does not know the leads, and simply plays by "common sense."

(15) The cataleptic trance-medium who refuses to play until he has rubbed his forehead and until eons of time have rolled their torpid lengths into the abysses of eternity.

(16) The nagger. This gentleman is usually an arguer, bristler, growler and gloater, as well as a "naggleton."

(17) The curious maiden who, when dummy, insists upon peeking at the hands of the leader and third hand.

(18) The person who hesitates unduly before making the trump or after the question, "May I play?"

(19) The tricky and artful player, who overfinesses, leads false cards, and, by his craft, leaves you absolutely in the dark as to what he really holds.

(20) The selfish animal who plays only for his own hand and *never* for yours.

(21) The doubter, who always watches you as you jot down the score — just to make sure that he is not being rooked or done out of his honors.

WILD PARTNERS

(22) The being — usually a woman — who inevitably claims an honor or two that she did not hold.

(23) The “book” player who plays entirely by rules — usually rules that don’t happen to govern the hand at issue.

(24) The fiend who doubles spades on nothing but faith, hope and stupidity.

(25) The fingerer. This strange creature has a curious habit of pulling out a card, putting it back in his hand, pulling it out again, putting it back, etc., *ad infinitum*.

(26) The man who can’t count thirteen. (There are half a million school children in New York City alone who can correctly count thirteen, but only a very few card players are similarly gifted.)

(27) The belligerent, defiant, excitable and warlike partner who has blood in his eye and is out to do serious damage to his adversaries.

(28) The partner who, even if you score a grand slam, is sure to point out a way by which you could have made another trick.

(29) The agreeable partner. (As we have pointed out in the beginning of this chap-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

ter, this is a purely mythical creature, like an angel or a minotaur.)

And finally there is

(30) the depraved wretch who, as soon as he catches you in a revoke, leans over the table and grabs three tricks from your pile without asking your pardon or permission. (It is related that King Canute ordered a courtier hanged for checkmating him at chess. What would the seashore king have done to *this* detestable creature? Hanging, or even boiling in oil are deaths too blissful and fragrant for him.)

It is certain that bridge is the supreme test of breeding. If you ever are fortunate enough, dear reader, to come upon a pleasant partner at bridge, you may be certain that he is a man of breeding, of good family, of gentle birth, and of unimpeachable manners. Curiously enough, many men of breeding are insufferable partners, but it is also true that they are more often agreeable partners than those men who have not had similar advantages in birth and training.

The word "etiquette" was, I am informed, not known to Doctor Johnson. I may add

WILD PARTNERS

that it is practically unknown, to this day — at the bridge-table. Some one has wisely said that *all* bridge-partners are idiots, while only a few of them are gentlemen.

As to etiquette, I take the liberty of pointing out to the bridge boor that it is hardly good form:

(1) To draw a card from his hand before it is his turn to play.

(2) To revoke a second time in order to hide his first revoke.

(3) To try and raise the table-stakes when the three other players are satisfied with them.

(4) To hesitate in his play in order to show his partner that he might have played differently, and perhaps with as good results.

(5) To hesitate, when third hand, about doubling a no-trump make, simply because he has a good heart suit. (Penalty — ten days at hard labor.)

(6) To slap a card on the table as if to say to his partner: "There! *That's* the suit I wanted."

(7) To make remarks about the play of a hand when he is merely an onlooker.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

(8) To claim the rest of the tricks until such a claim is beyond dispute.

(9) To play a winning card and then immediately draw out another card from his hand as if to say: "Partner! That's the best! Don't trump it."

(10) To frown or sigh or groan when he has drawn an indifferent partner. (Penalty — thirty days.)

(11) To ridicule or gloat over the misplays of his adversaries.

(12) To reach over and grab three tricks for a revoke from the revoker's stack. (Maximum penalty — public guillotine or gallows.)

A nice sense of honor and a kindly consideration of the feelings of others will suggest, to any well-bred player, scores of other points to avoid, but the above are some of the most glaring instances of bad taste constantly seen at the bridge-table. It is really surprising to note how often a partner will fail to observe some vital point of etiquette at bridge.

Partners are, as a rule, like the insane. They are sane except on one subject, but on that subject they are hopeless, perverted, in-

WILD PARTNERS

curable. I know one very charming player who, in every point, respects the feelings of others; nobody could be more well-bred and delightful, but, so soon as the cards are placed in the wrong position for the next deal, he becomes petulant and aggressive, and his wrath is unappeasable.

In private life we do not loudly proclaim, to our friends and acquaintances, their weaknesses and shortcomings.

We do not say: "Bessie, you are an unutterably stupid woman," "George, you are not only dull of comprehension but an incurable congenital idiot into the bargain," "Harry, you are a blank, blank, dash, semi-colon and two interrogation points," but in bridge it sometimes seems as though our only object were to browbeat our friends, wound their feelings, brutalize and badger them on every possible occasion. We all have our faults at bridge. My own particular vice is to throw the cards on the floor and call for fresh packs. I must also admit that, during my long runs of bad luck, I become alarmingly cynical and sour. A sullen despair somehow seems to possess me. But we should all earnestly

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

strive to improve and be as the saints are — “blameless and without guile.”

There are two or three little anecdotes connected with bad partners which are, perhaps, worth quoting, as they contain a certain modicum of humor.

To begin with, there are two stories about the first division — as arranged in my list of thirty horrors and abominations — the lady who has forgotten to bring her purse.

I once played with such an one for a few rubbers, and we, as partners, had lost about ten dollars each. Knowing well her failing and hoping to head off her demand for a loan, I asked her, half humorously, if she had any money to lend me, “as I am,” I added, “unfortunately without funds.” Her only answer was to look at me quizzically, smile, turn her golden reticule inside out, and exclaim laughingly, “Chicane!”

The second story is also at my expense. I had won twenty-seven dollars from a very rich woman, who had made the usual remarks about her purse, a check to follow to-morrow, “so sorry,” etc.

“But,” she added thoughtfully, “you must

WILD PARTNERS

give me a memorandum of the amount, and, if I forget to send it to you immediately, I want you to promise me that you will remind me of it."

I smilingly assented and gave her a pencilled memorandum of the amount. Sad weeks rolled by. "Nit check"—as the late Mr. Baxter would have said.

One evening, at the opera, the same charming lady told me a terrible scandal about a man who owed her fifteen dollars at bridge. Now twenty-seven dollars is not a very large amount, but, when it has been—for nearly two months—owed to you at cards, it assumes, somehow, gigantic proportions. I thought of my lady's request to be reminded, and laughingly told her that she herself had owed me nearly twice fifteen dollars for six weeks!

Mortification, dismay, horror, and doubt were all flashed at me from those lovely, innocent eyes! She finally explained that there *must* be some mistake, as she remembered writing me a letter in which her check had been enclosed. To cut the story short, I told her that, while she had once owed me twenty-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

nine dollars, I was sure that I should find her letter and the check among the papers on my desk.

The next day, to my horror and despair, I received a letter from her dated eight weeks back, together with a check similarly dated, and a little note explaining that the letter and check, though written ages since, had lodged in a corner of her portfolio. "And," she added, "you will see by *your own* memorandum that the amount was not twenty-nine dollars, but twenty-seven dollars."

I had unintentionally exaggerated the amount by two dollars, and I can't help suspecting that the lovely lady, to this very day, still believes me to be something of a liar and a rascal.

Apropos of class twenty-two, in my list of bridge pests.

There is, in Pittsburg, a lady whose only failing at bridge is that she constantly claims to have held the ten-spot of trumps, when the honor score is under discussion.

It is a sort of obsession with her. The claimant's name is Rebecca X. Her little subterfuge is so well known in Pittsburg that

WILD PARTNERS

this particular honor is always called, among her circle of intimates, "the Rebecca."

"I had ace, king, queen, jack; who had the Rebecca?" Such remarks as this are frequently heard in Pittsburg, and I have even heard the term used in Atlantic City. Soon it may be prevalent in Cleveland — and perhaps all over the country.

Reader! Have you a Rebecca in your family — or on your calling list?

Apropos of bad partners, I may add that I have played bridge with a multitude of inconceivably bad players, but I have never yet met one of them that would take a handicap. How strange this is! In tennis, in pigeon-shooting, in bicycling and in billiards, handicaps are very generally offered and taken. An offer of a handicap at golf or at any other game of the sort is never taken as an insult, but directly you offer to give a man odds at bridge, he instantly and indignantly refuses.

The secret of the mystery is two-fold. First: Every player in the world rather "fancies" his game. He thinks himself a far better player than he really is. Second: Games like billiards, court-tennis, etc., are

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

purely games of physical deftness and skill, whereas bridge is largely a matter of intellect and reason. It is frightfully humiliating to acknowledge ourselves *mentally* inferior to another; but, somehow, it is not quite so humiliating to admit our *physical* inferiority.

No welter-weight would challenge Jack Johnson to fight twenty rounds in an open ring, but, at bridge, any bantam is ready to "take on" any heavy-weight at any time, in any club cardroom, and always on absolutely even terms.

This, perhaps, is the secret of the joy of bridge. We are all nearly perfect — in our own eyes. When we are told by others that our game is nothing but the worst sort of bumble-puppy, we cast upon them a pitying look, satisfied that they are poor, misguided imbeciles at best, too stupid to recognize flagrant genius when they meet with it.

Whenever there is a gulf between two partners, the rubber is bound to become a bore. Nothing breaks up a game so much as one or two or three players who are greatly out-classed by the fourth. But when two good players thoroughly understand each other

WILD PARTNERS

there can be nothing prettier than to watch them play partners against two slightly inferior players. Their cards appear, somehow, fairly to talk. Every card seems to have its mysterious double meaning — the one the obvious or visible meaning, the other a significance altogether veiled and esoteric — except to the chosen few. One discard will murmur "Follow me," another will whisper "Partner, avoid me, for I shall bring you ruin." The eight spot of spades is led and, presto, it reveals to the leader's partner the exact position of every spade in the pack. In and out the cards seem magically to weave through the warp of the dummy; escaping danger, inflicting wounds, gliding like serpents through the high cards in the maker's hand, and carrying everywhere a message, a purpose, a desire! To the born whist player the message of the cards is easy to read, but to the solid, unimaginative, "rule" player, more than half of the whispers of the cards remain totally unheard and undreamed of.

At the beginning of the eighth trick a good bridge player can usually place the remaining cards with an almost mathematical certainty.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

In some hands the fifth trick will mark the remaining cards beyond peradventure. I have seen it tried, and successfully, over and over again. After the eighth trick, there are, broadly speaking, no rules. There are, then, nothing but facts.

When we watch such fine American players as Mr. Elwell; Mr. Street; Mr. Foster; Mr. Dodson, the actor; Mr. Charles Schwab and Mr. Harry Ward we become convinced that it is not merely skill that these men possess at cards, but a certain inborn genius, a thing which no study, alas, will ever bring to us; a sense, an instinct, a gift — like an ear for music or the imaginative and intuitive sympathy of a great poet or novelist.

Opposed to such natural card geniuses as these are the great lawyers, the great intellects, the successful men of affairs, who study bridge year after year and seem, at the end, to be no nearer perfection than when they commenced playing. Here is an example, culled from a collection of thousands of similar blunders by intelligent men and women.

I was playing a very close rubber on the Via Goito, in Rome, with Baron R., an Ital-

WILD PARTNERS

ian nobleman, as a partner. He was one of the leading economists and financial authorities of the day and had been an under minister of finance in King Humbert's time. He had played bridge for nearly four years. We were eighteen all on the rubber game and hearts were trumps. We each had three cards left in hand. The baron held the ace and queen of hearts (trumps) and a losing club. The king and two other hearts were held somewhere against him. We had taken six tricks and it was his turn to play. Dummy, who was to play after him, held three losing cards and no trump. Now it seems almost incredible that a man of parts, an ex-minister, a writer on finance, could be in any doubt as to what to play at such a crisis. By throwing the lead with his losing club the lead *must* come up to his ace and queen of trumps and we must make two tricks, or sixteen points, and the rubber. If I had the winning club, and it was not trumped, we could make *three* tricks, but two tricks were staring him in the face, as certain as death itself.

Any child should have reasoned out the situation correctly. Not to do so denied a

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

person a measure of mentality above that of an ape, but my minister thought long and seriously of the matter, looked wisely at the score, sighed and then shot out his ace of trumps. The dealer and I both followed with a small trump; my partner now hurled the queen into the embraces of the king, who, in company with the best diamond, was awaiting her in the dealer's hand. We had lost the rubber.

At this point I mentally congratulated Italy on being rid of such an adviser.

I have seen hundreds of such idiotic plays as this, and perpetrated by men of more than ordinary mental gifts. It was said of Shelley that he could not do a sum in simple subtraction, and of Steinitz, the chess marvel, that he could not memorize ten lines of poetry. How strange are the vagaries of genius — and of bridge players!

There is a wonderfully true saying that everybody thinks they can drive a horse and build a fire, but we may add to it another that is yet more wonderful and true: "Everybody *knows* that they can play bridge."

I have so often heard men say: "Yes, I

WILD PARTNERS

like bridge as a *pastime*, but I should never dream of *studying* it. I don't approve of taking my pleasures too seriously."

What utter nonsense this is. Should a man spend his holidays playing polo without knowing how to ride? Should a man play poker who pays no attention to what his fellow players have drawn? There are rules in bridge, established customs, and recognized leads. Why won't men learn them? They are simple enough, Heaven knows, and yet we see men year after year stumbling along from one morass into another, opening every hand incorrectly, refusing to cover honors, finessing wildly against their partner and committing every abomination known in bridge, simply because they are too lazy to pick up a book and spend an evening or two in learning the first principles of good play.

If a man leads the two of hearts, in a no-trump hand, from a suit consisting of the ace, queen, 9, 8, 6, 3, 2, he will perhaps make as many tricks in that suit as if he had opened the 8, but his partner will put him down for a four-card suit and perhaps abandon the suit in favor of one that looks a little more prom-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

ising. This is only one of the hundred or so truths that a man might learn if he would condescend to spend an evening or two with a good book on bridge.

CHAPTER III

A FEW CHEERING ANECDOTES

MY readers may forgive me for relating a few innocent anecdotes about the game which will serve to show what a strong hold it has taken on some of its devotees.

The first has to do with a very broad-minded Episcopalian bishop who is an inveterate bridger, and has even been accused, on occasions, of neglecting the spiritual needs of his flock in order that he might perfect himself in the masterly play of no-trumpers and the scientific blending of his two hands.

A Mrs. N., who was herself a great lover of the game, had gone down to the bishop's country-place to spend the week-end. The bishop had also invited a married couple who were adept bridgers.

On Sunday — at afternoon-tea time — the bishop having finished his evening service, the party were gathered around the open fire,

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

chatting cozily over the buttered muffins. Mrs. N., who was aching for a rubber and could no longer bear the idea of "the unbridged chasm" before dinner, asked the bishop, pointblank, if he could not — just for once — overcome the clerical prejudice against Sunday bridge. The bishop was a widower, and his two children were busily engaged on the hearth-rug in reconstructing a most complicated jigsaw puzzle, while a French maid was deftly taking away the tea things. The bishop seemed much shocked by Mrs. N.'s horrifying suggestion.

"My dear Mrs. N.," he said, "if I had to consider myself alone in a matter of this sort I should perhaps feel justified, merely in order to give *you* pleasure, in yielding to what I am well aware is an insidious and a growing evil, but you must remember that there are others whose moral welfare is perhaps at stake, and whose spiritual paths I have always, however imperfectly, endeavored to direct. The children are with us, and Félise, my parlor-maid. What would they think of me? How could I justify the imperiling of their moral strongholds?"

CHEERING ANECDOTES

In a few minutes, when the maid had vanished with the tea-tray and when the children had been cordially embraced by their father and quite as cordially sent to bed, the worthy bishop went on with his ennobling train of thoughts.

“ Yes, Mrs. N., we must try, in crises of this nature, to think of others. However, as the children are beyond the power of disturbing us, and as Félice is doubtless in the dining-room setting the dinner-table, I will, if you will accept me as your partner, challenge our friends here to two rubbers. I must, however, urge you to lock this experience in your breast, and I also beg of you not to find fault with me if I make it very light, and, above all, I implore you to curb your wicked propensity to revoke, particularly at points in the game where there can be no earthly advantage in it.”

The bishop then proceeded to shuffle the fifty-two allies of Satan and to riffle the cards for the cut.

The other anecdote has to do with a Mr. R., one of the most expert players in Boston.

A year or two ago he suddenly discovered

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

that he had arrived at "a certain age," and deemed it time for him to marry, settle down and gather about him those creature comforts with which Destiny had so shamefully neglected to supply him. The uncertainty of a spasmodic income, gathered at atrociously late hours, in the card-room of his club, by outplaying his fellow bridgers, had begun to wear on his nerves.

Having once fairly embarked on his quest of a helpmate, it was quite natural that his searching gaze should rest with favor upon Miss Bond, a wealthy and highly cultivated maiden of, approximately, thirty-seven summers. Her eye-glasses, her extreme intellectuality, and her cordial dislike of bridge were certainly points against her, but her control of a Nevada gold mine and her comfortable house on Commonwealth Avenue were little advantages on which his fevered fancy loved to linger.

Finally, at a "Thursday evening"—a sometimes instructive, but never hilarious, form of Boston entertainment—he made bold to broach to her the delicate subject which was mildly obsessing him.

CHEERING ANECDOTES

To his no small surprise and gratification, his advances were met with a considerable degree of toleration. "But," said the learned and cynical spinster, "I cannot conceive that you are serious in this. Why! I am convinced that you do not love me with half the sincerity that you do your everlasting bridge at the Somerset Club!"

"Ah," quoted our hero, with a fine show of enthusiasm and erudition, "I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honors more."

This cheerful sally appealed so irresistibly to the cultured maiden's heart — or, should we say, "brain"? — that an intellectual *entente cordiale* was soon established which finally ripened, on both sides, into a platonic marriage.

It gives me much pain to add that the poor lady has, since her marriage, lost every dollar of her fortune and that the poorer husband is now forced to support three people by his bridge instead of one.

One of the oldest and at the same time one of the best anecdotes of bridge is that which Mr. Charles Hawtrey told with telling effect

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

in his little play, "The Man from Blankley's." As the story is not so well known on this side of the water as it is in England my generous readers may forgive me for repeating it, although I am frank to admit that I only tell it, because of its maturity, with a blush of shame upon my cheeks.

A family, having become bitten with the rage for bridge, played it in their home upon every conceivable occasion. The family rubber was made up of the father, mother, son, and daughter. During a particularly long session the father was seized with heart-failure and died.

The deceased had often expressed a horror of being buried alive and had begged his family to cremate, rather than bury him, upon his demise. A discussion soon arose as to whether or not their beloved parent should be sent to the crematory. The daughter seemed anxious to carry out her father's wishes; the son was strong for a burial in the family lot.

No agreement having been reached, the daughter finally turned to her mother and said: "Well, I'll leave it to you, mother."

CHEERING ANECDOTES

So firmly had her beloved game taken hold of the bereaved widow that she sobbingly replied: "You leave it to me, Muriel? Well — I'll make it a spade."

A lady from Chicago told me the following shopping experience which, she maintained, had actually befallen her.

She went into a dry-goods shop and was vainly trying to secure the attention of two glorious beings in black *princesse* costumes, surmounted by gigantic and plentifully marceled pompadours. Their voices were as sharp as the proverbial tack. Their heads were as close together as their pompadours would permit and their conversation was evidently fervid and engrossing.

After the lady had waited patiently for some minutes for the discussion between them to cease, so that she might modestly inquire as to the price of Copenhagen blue amazon plumes, she was surprised to overhear the following pregnant remark:

"No, dearie, *positively* you are wrong; from king, jack, 10, you always want to lead the jack."

This dictum, although it surprised the lady

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

greatly, gave her a cue which she was not slow to take up.

"Excuse me," she said, "but I think you are wrong. If you will read Elwell's new book you will find that the 10 is the correct lead from such a combination of honors. I am glad to see that you ladies like bridge; I am myself passionately fond of it. Oh! I wonder if you could show me, without at all troubling yourselves, that beautiful feather in the case beyond you."

The blonde goddesses were at once propitiated and an *entente cordiale* was soon established.

Speaking of Mr. Elwell and his books reminds me that I recently heard a rather amusing story at his expense. It seems that there is a lady who is, by many people, considered the best bridge player in Philadelphia. She has, indeed, an almost national reputation as a bridge player, and Mr. Elwell had often heard her praises sung by many of his friends and pupils. The lady chanced to come to New York and enter a tournament that Mr. Elwell was managing. Toward the end of the afternoon he came over and stood behind her

CHEERING ANECDOTES

chair and watched her open a no-trump hand. She had a very peculiar hand and a difficult one to open. She held major tenaces in clubs and diamonds. In hearts she held the king, 9, 7, 4, and in spades she held the king, 9, 7, 5. She hesitated for a long time and finally opened the four of hearts. Mr. Elwell turned on his heel with a look of utter contempt on his face. When asked, after the tournament, what he thought of her play, he replied that she evidently had not the slightest idea of the game, as she did not even know enough to open her strongest suit at no trumps.

There is a very rich man — Mr. M. we shall call him — who is known in Chicago as the meanest man in the world. Stories are forever being told of his meanness (where money is concerned) but I think that the following truthful tale is, perhaps, the purest gem of the entire collection.

He had been playing at a lady's house until about eleven o'clock, when his taxicab was announced. At the table with him were three ladies. Mr. M. was keeping the score and had nearly finished a rubber. The distress-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

ing knowledge that his taxicab was there at the door, clicking away money, was almost more than he could bear. He hurried the ladies along and seemed in a terrible fret to get away. When the rubber was over, the hostess, who had been playing against him, suggested another rubber, but Mr. M. was already in the hall, bundling on his overcoat, and would not hear of anything of the kind. He must hurry home at once, he said. He showed the hostess the score, from which it appeared that he was the only winner, the ladies owing him two, twelve, and eight dollars respectively.

When the ladies made the usual announcement that they had brought no money with them, his face fell, as though he was a little saddened thus to be robbed — even temporarily — of his rightful and lawful gains. He stuffed the scores into the hands of his hostess and leaped, with the agility of a wildcat, into his taxicab, which drove rapidly off through the rain in the direction of his house near the lake front. The two visiting ladies smiled, said good night to Mrs. B., their hostess, and took their departure.

CHEERING ANECDOTES

At precisely a quarter to twelve, Mrs. B. jumped into her bed and, before midnight had chimed from her hall clock, she was sleeping peacefully. In the middle of the night, as it seemed to her — in reality, at half-past twelve — she was rudely awakened by a knocking at her door. The author of the knocks was a maid, who informed her mistress that there was some one who wished to speak to her on the telephone, “very particular.”

Mrs. B. dragged herself out of her Empire bed and, after slipping on a gossamer arrangement of gauze and diaphanous translucency, trudged to the telephone in her boudoir and took up the receiver in a mood that, we must admit, bordered on petulance. The “party” at the other end of the contraption was none other than Mr. M. — the meanest man in the world.

“What is it you wish?” said Mrs. B., with a wretched simulation of good nature and interest.

“Oh, Mrs. B., I’m so glad I connected with you, as I wanted to tell you something rather important. I have just this moment

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

remembered that in the second hand of the last rubber I gave you four honors in hearts, or thirty-two. In reality, you only held simple honors, or sixteen. As we were playing two and a half cent points it might easily make a difference in the money score and, as I chanced to have a telephone by my bed, I thought it only right to call you up and tell you about it."

Mrs. B. hung up the receiver, boiling with suppressed indignation and wrath. She then called the maid to the door and instructed her to sit up until precisely three o'clock that night, ring up Mr. M., and inform him that Mrs. B. wished to say that the sixteen added points made no difference whatever in the money score.

It was a mild revenge, to be sure, but she could think of nothing more cruel or inhuman.

There is one more story about Mr. M. — the meanest man in the world — that is quite short and that may amuse my readers, as it also concerns the game of bridge whist.

Mr. M. is married. His wife is, in her own right, an extremely poor woman, as well

CHEERING ANECDOTES

as an extremely poor bridge player. She adores playing for money, but her husband, with an eye to the probable expense of such wickedness on her part, has sternly forbidden her — notwithstanding his large fortune — to play for any financial stake whatsoever.

Poor Mrs. M. one day found herself among some ladies who were playing for five-cent points. She longed to plunge in, but her wholesome fear of her husband at first restrained her. Finally, however, her poor weak moral nature crumbled into bits and she announced that she wanted to play for the table stakes of five cents. After this cold plunge she sat down at the table in deadly earnest and fairly wallowed in the consciousness of her moral enormity. At the end of the *séance* — which had lasted until past her dinner hour — she found herself twenty-four dollars “to the good.”

Snatching up her gains, she hurried to her house, where she found Mr. M. in a fine rage at having to wait fifteen minutes for his dinner.

“Where have you been?” he shouted to her.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

"Why, my dear, I never saw you this way before. What *can* be the matter with you?"

"Where have you been? Answer me!"

"I've been to Mrs. Duquesne's, playing bridge, my dear."

"Oh! You have, have you? Well! Mrs. Duquesne plays for money, as I happen to know, and so do all her friends, don't they?"

"They certainly do, my love."

"And did you play for money, too?"

"Yes, my dear; I must confess that I did."

"What stakes? Pennies?"

"Well, no! To be perfectly truthful, Henry, I played for five-cent points."

"You know that I have absolutely forbidden it. This is a deucedly serious thing. How dared you disobey me? You must be mad! What possible justification have you got for doing it? Answer me!"

"Well, Henry, dear, the only justification that I have is that I won twenty-four dollars."

"You won *how* much?"

"Twenty-four dollars."

"Let me see it!"

At this point Mrs. M. began to feel herself

CHEERING ANECDOTES

mistress of the situation. She took the crisp bills out of her purse and showed them to her lord and master with a sense of mingled pride and shame. He snatched the money from her hands, stuffed it into his pocket, showed her to her chair in the dining room and said, as she sat ruefully down at the table:

“Helen, you have hit upon the one and only possible justification for such shocking disobedience — so please be thundering careful never to advance any other.”

CHAPTER IV

THE MATTER OF GAINS — AND LOSSES

A WORD or two about the question of luck and winnings at bridge.

While it is true that skill plays a more important part in bridge than in almost any other card-game, it is also the case that luck will often run persistently against a first-class player. When the game was first introduced it was comparatively easy for a good player to make a "fair living" out of the game. Such a player could then declare no trumps on a weak hand; could take foolish chances in the play of a trump-hand; could deceive his opponents by false carding and fool them by tricky leads; but, now that the game has reached a pretty fair degree of excellence, such acrobatic feats are far less likely to deceive our adversaries. Prince P., a Russian nobleman in London, and perhaps the best bridge-player that I have ever met, told me

GAINS AND LOSSES

that for the past three years he had made but a trifling sum at the game. In one of these years he had lost nearly three hundred pounds.

Mr. R.'s winnings are interesting. He is much better than an average player and has kept his bridge accounts very accurately for five years. He has played, I suppose, a little over a dozen rubbers per week. During the past five years he has averaged a profit of about eight hundred dollars a year, playing at five-cent points. Some years he has gone as high as thirteen hundred and some as low as three hundred. I know a poor player who, last year, made eighteen hundred dollars at five-cent points. I also know an excellent player who lost two hundred in two weeks at the same stakes. In other words, there is nothing sure about one's income from the game, but it may be said with truth that the good players *nearly always* find themselves considerably ahead at the end of a year.

The biggest loss that I have ever heard of at bridge was in a celebrated card-club in London, known, humorously, as "The Boozers' Rest." The son of a South African millionaire went, on a Friday, into this club to

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

buy a cigar. He had purchased a ticket for the Covent Garden ball, and his cab was waiting for him at the door of the club. Some friends urged him to play the usual "just one rubber," and he weak-mindedly assented. He played another and another. He dismissed his cab, tore up his ticket to the ball, and played until six o'clock in the morning, doubling and redoubling his stakes until he was finally playing for enormous points.

During the course of this *séance* a very amusing accident befell which I have never chanced to hear of before. The African, after losing a rubber, would tear up the cards or throw them indiscriminately on the floor and call for fresh packs. Toward morning he was surrounded by a perfect sea of cards.

During one rubber — about dawn — he dropped one of his cards after the deal, and asked if he might pick it up from the mass beneath him as he was too tired to deal all over again. He explained that he was nearly dead for want of sleep. There was some discussion about this point as he was not certain as to the exact card he had dropped. It was finally agreed that he might pick up the card

GAINS AND LOSSES

he *thought* was his and call it. If none of the other three held that card, he might keep it. He picked up a card and called the queen of spades. As the others did not hold the queen of spades the African put it in his hand. He glanced at his cards and saw that his luck had turned at last. As he held an enormous hand he promptly declared no trumps.

He soon secured the lead and led out the ace, king, and queen of spades, to which everybody followed. He then led the thirteenth spade — a nine — on which everybody discarded. Greatly pleased with his change of luck, he started to play his queen of clubs up to the ace of clubs in the dummy. In a triumphant way he played the card — only to find that it was not the queen of clubs but the queen of spades.

His adversaries at this point both exclaimed that there was something “demned odd” about the queen in question. It appears that he had himself held the queen of spades all the time and that the queen he had rescued from the floor was a duplicate from a rejected pack. A new deal was thereupon called for by the adversaries, and the unfortunate chap,

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

from that time on, lost continuously and did not hold another good hand.

When the session had finally adjourned and the poor fellow had at last stopped playing, he owed the three gentlemen eight thousand pounds between them.

Within a day or two he sailed for Africa, without settling his debt and each of the three men, without further delay, began branding him about London as a "welsher." Some two or three months afterward they were all surprised and elated to receive their individual checks from this gentleman and, I must say in their favor, that they lost no time in telling everybody of the African's square dealing and good faith.

Such losses as these are, however, rarely heard of in this country, although Mr. Gates and some of his associates at Saratoga were known to play, on some occasions, as high as five-dollar points. There was one memorable session at these stakes that is said to have lasted for twenty-four consecutive hours, and the amounts won and lost at it must have been very considerable. These table stakes at Sar-

GAINS AND LOSSES

atoga were the highest that I have ever heard of in America.

Although we have been called a nation of gamblers, it might truthfully be said that all our really heavy gambling is confined to Wall Street. I have known men who think nothing of carrying twenty or thirty thousand shares of stock on margin who feel very much depressed and annoyed if they lose forty or fifty dollars at bridge. A conspicuous example of this is Mr. Chicane, the president of one of our most important railroads in the East, who is a brilliant bridge-player. He is a man of vast wealth but he simply cannot bear to be defeated at the bridge table and has on occasions been known to break up a fixed rubber as soon as he saw that his luck was running dead against him.

This Mr. Chicane spent a part of last summer at Newport and it was there that I witnessed a wonderful run of bad luck against him at bridge.

Mr. C. and Baron A., an Italian — and one of the finest players it has ever been my good fortune to meet — were being worsted

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

in a set rubber by two second-class players. The baron and Mr. C. had been challenged by Mr. W. and Mr. F. The latter pair, in less than five hours' play, won eleven consecutive rubbers. They cut the deal and the seats every time. Their rubbers were, all but one of them, fairly large ones and they each pocketed one hundred and eighteen dollars at five-cent points, or a little over ten dollars for every rubber played. Some of the rubbers must have taken less than fifteen minutes to play. I was at a near-by table and, occasionally, while I was dummy, went over and watched the progress of the match. The Baron and Mr. C. played faultlessly, while I should say that W. and F. "chucked" ten tricks in every rubber, but their cards were crowding in upon them and they *could* not lose.

It would be interesting to get exact figures about runs of luck at bridge. Some years ago I won thirteen consecutive rubbers, but I doubt if I ever won more than eight at one sitting. I have often heard that, a few years ago, Mr. P. at the Racquet Club in New York won twenty-nine consecutive rub-

GAINS AND LOSSES

bers, but I am not prepared to say that these figures are correct.

Such a run of luck as this would be little short of marvelous. Let us, for instance, suppose that the three hundred million people who inhabit Europe were to enter a bridge tournament in which every couple was to play a rubber and drop out as soon as they were defeated — the winners keeping on. After twenty-nine rounds of such a tournament there would be only one surviving player. In other words it is, in betting parlance, three hundred million to one against a man's winning twenty-nine consecutive rubbers.

But after all, such a run of luck as this is, humanly speaking, possible! The red recently came up at a Monte Carlo roulette-wheel thirty-two times in succession. Why should not the cards behave as strangely as the marble?

While I am on this question, I feel that I must instance the worst long run of bad luck which I have ever known.

Seven years ago Mr. L. used to play regularly at the Union Club in New York. He played every week-day afternoon and must

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

have averaged about three hours' play. He never played for more or less than ten-cent points, the club stakes at the Union.

Between the first of September and the fifth of April — seven months — he lost a little over eight thousand dollars. At the time, it is true, he was not a first-class player, but, for that matter, few of his adversaries were, either. He has since improved his game and is to-day, I think, a fairly consistent player. His average loss was about forty dollars a day, or four hundred points, or two rubbers of two hundred points each. He figured that he played about six rubbers a day, of which he lost four. He assures me that he kept his bridge accounts very accurately and that he could not be wrong about his figures.

To show how much money skill will save a man at bridge, I have only to point out that, had Mr. L. played well enough to win, every day, *one* of his four losing rubbers, he would have come out even on his bridge, instead of losing eight thousand dollars in a little over seven months. Had he been able to do this

GAINS AND LOSSES

he would have won and lost three rubbers a day.

Some good players are, curiously enough, consistent losers. It seems as though destiny had decided to work perpetually against them. They play hand after hand perfectly, make it correctly, and take advantage of every error on their adversaries' part; but all to no avail — they seem *bound* to lose.

I have in mind Mr. H., who is certainly one of the best players in New York, and who is, and has been for years, a steady loser at the game. Captain Lee-Barber, one of the most adroit and brilliant bridgers in London, and probably the best of the military players in England, told me that he had not won at the game for four years. Mr. Dalton, who writes about bridge so entertainingly in English magazines and who was, at one time, a very great winner at the game, has now come down to pennies, as he found his losses at sixpenny bridge mounted up to a very high figure.

On this whole matter of gains and losses

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

at bridge there is, everywhere, the greatest apparent ignorance. This is particularly true among the literary ladies and gentlemen who are to-day using the game as a background for their preposterous fiction. The *London Graphic* is one of the last to offend. In a leading serial in this popular paper there recently appeared a tragic account of a poor young gentleman and a poor young lady who attended a fashionable bridge-party. Being penniless, they were, of course, playing for money. (In fiction the characters, whenever they are so poor that they cannot pay their honest losses, invariably "sit in" a game for high stakes and, of course, lose. The cruel hostess then demands payment, a scene ensues, the pulpit takes up the scandal and everybody agrees that bridge is a shocking and immoral game and that "this sort of thing" must stop. It never seems to occur to the moralizing authors and preachers that the man or woman who plays cards for high points, when unable to meet probable losses, is either a fool or a sharper, and that the cruel hostess who is asked to whistle for her winnings is, in reality, the unhappy char-

GAINS AND LOSSES

acter in the drama and, as such, most entitled to our sympathy and tears.)

Well, to go on with the *Graphic* story. The luck is about even. The excitement is, of course, "intense." The youth and the maiden are partners. The Greek chorus is announcing the impending doom of the plighted lovers, when "she deals and makes it hearts; her partner doubles and they lose frightfully." The loss is, naturally, a "tremendous" one. Somebody really ought mercifully to inform these fiction writers that, in bridge, the doubling is not done by one's partner. This part of the merriment is usually left to the adversaries.

Another tragic story was recently accepted by a prominent American magazine, the editor of which was kind enough to let me read it in manuscript form.

The poor but virtuous young wife of a very handsome but moral young man attends, without her husband's knowledge, a bridge-party. She plays a few rubbers and, on leaving, is handed the paltry sum of five hundred dollars, the mere bagatelle which she has netted by her skill. (I may add that

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

the players are all simple, homely people and living in such a small way that the virtuous bride's winnings fairly took my breath away.)

The tragedy now bubbles forth in torrents. It seems that the wife was not aware that she was playing for money. It also seems that the husband has forbidden his wife to gamble at cards. The incident naturally causes a breach between the husband and wife — I mean *book* "naturally," not *life* "naturally" — a separation is imminent, but she gives the money to his pet charity and peace is finally restored and all is merry as a funeral-bell. (I must add, in justice to the magazine, that the editor had decided, when I last saw him, to soften the absurdity and whittle down the amount of the winnings a little before printing the yarn.)

I can only add that I have played bridge in so-called fashionable houses all over the world, and I have never heard of a lady winning or losing, in a sitting, anything like this sum at bridge, although it happens almost every Sunday — in the pulpits and Sunday supplements.

GAINS AND LOSSES

I have often been asked about the case of the young man at Saratoga, and, as a very perplexing moral question is involved in it, I shall quote it and allow my readers to solve the ethical problem for themselves.

It was during the August races. The youth was asked to make up a rubber with some very rich men who were known to be heavy plungers on the turf. He assented, but, before beginning, he asked them what the table-stakes were.

"Well," said Mr. G., in whose room at the United States Hotel the game was being played, "we *have* been playing five, but we can raise or lower the stakes if you wish."

Mr. F., the hero of the story, said that the points were perfectly satisfactory to him, and the game went on smoothly enough for four or five rubbers, when the session closed, and the three plungers plunged into a "low-neck" cab and drove off to the races.

As they were leaving, Mr. G. thanked Mr. F. for making up the game and informed him that he would send him, on the following day, a check for what he, F., had won.

The next afternoon F. was thunderstruck

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

to receive G.'s check for three thousand two hundred dollars. He knew that, at five-cent points, he had won about thirty dollars. He accordingly wrote G. a polite little note saying that he fancied a mistake had been made, as he had only been playing five-cent points, and enclosing the check for correction.

Mr. G. replied that the check was perfectly correct; the stakes, he explained, had been *five-dollar* points and not *five-cent* points. He added that if F. had lost at the session, he, G., would have expected payment from him on a five-dollar basis and politely insisted upon F.'s keeping the check.

Query: What was F. to do?

In England they have lately been waging a great discussion in print as to luck at bridge. An instance has been quoted of Mr. O. S. at the Turf Club in London who, for nineteen nights, rose a winner of upward of twenty pounds per night. This is luck indeed, but I have often thought that the vagaries of luck were a little more mysterious and perplexing than we are wont to suppose. Most players think that luck depends solely on the cards which are held jointly by them

GAINS AND LOSSES

and their partners, but, in reality, luck at bridge may bless and brighten one in a dozen ways not usually taken into account and, conversely, it may torture and torment one in manners undreamt of and innumerable.

Let us, for instance, consider a little the case of an imaginary Mr. A.:

(1) He may walk into the smoke-laden card-room at his club and find himself a minute too late to cut into a particular rubber. As a result he will go to another table, where he will hold only the most atrocious cards, while, if he had cut in at the first table, he might have held enormous hands.

(2) He may cut for a partner and get the worst player at the table.

(3) He may cut for the deal and lose it, and the adversaries may score game on their first deal.

(4) His partner may be a good player — as a general rule — but some devil will prompt him to play ill while he is playing with A.

(5) He may choose the wrong cards.

(6) His adversaries may play stupidly and not in accordance with the rules, and yet

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

that very stupidity will win them the game.

(7) He may have two equal suits to open; if he opens his red suit he is lost; if he opens his black, he is saved; and he will inevitably open the red.

(8) He may have nothing but winners in his hand and yet revoke inadvertently.

(9) He may lose a big rubber and win three little ones, and yet be out on the day.

(10) He may make it no trumps on three perfect suits and expect his dummy to supply his missing suit and the dummy is just as likely as not to give him no help in that suit at all.

(11) He may win persistently at pennies and lose persistently at five cents — or ten.

(12) He may have doubled no trumps with nine spades to the ace, king, jack, and lead his ace only to find that the queen is third in the dummy.

(13) He may find all the adversaries' trumps bunched in one hand and none in the other.

(14) He may expose an ace or a king while dealing to himself and be called upon to deal again only to give himself a worth-

GAINS AND LOSSES

less hand, whereas his cards before had been enormous.

(15) His suit may be blocked with an ace single in dummy, or he may have a long suit cleared in dummy with no way of getting in to make it.

(16) He may forget that a wretched little seven is good and his loss of memory may cost him the game, while his adversaries may forget similar things (and even revoke) and still win a big rubber. Had he won that particular trick with his seven the whole run of the cards might have changed for the rest of the day.

(17) He may have a good hand and his partner may, at the same time, have nothing.

(18) He may have enormous cards when it is the adversaries' turn to deal — and declare spades — while he will have wretched cards when it is his own turn to deal.

(19) He may go to twenty-eight and stick there forever.

(20) His hand may not fit his partner's; all the finesses may go wrong. There is a grand slam in sight if the king of clubs is on the right and the king of hearts on the left.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Inevitably they will be arranged in the other order.

(21) He may false card ten times and each time it will bring disaster, but the opponents may false card forever without any serious damage to them.

(22) He may take extras in the room and lose on his extras more than he has won on his own rubbers.

(23) He may cut a good partner, rubber after rubber; they may both play perfectly, and yet they may lose them all.

(24) He may declare spades protectively and find a hundred aces in the dummy.

(25) He may "carry" his partner (that is, assume his partner's financial interest in the game as well as his own) and *lose*, or be carried by his partner and *win*.

Skill and luck may carry the day, but skill without luck is far worse than luck without skill. Strangely enough, it is always the lucky player who is ready to swear that there is no such thing as luck. Such a player is sure to laugh good-naturedly at the idea of any one believing to the contrary. Men of this type may win twenty rubbers in succession

GAINS AND LOSSES

and the chances of their winning twenty more are exactly as good as though they hadn't won any. The past in no way affects the future. In other words, their gains for six months have nothing to do with their probable gains or losses for the succeeding six. At the beginning of every rubber the chances are even, just as in tossing a coin the toss may have been tails for ten tosses and the chances for a head are no better than they were at the outset.

As regards the matter of stakes, previously under review, we ought, in America — in our prosperous and surging times — to hang our heads in shame, when we read of the sums that were won in England in the highly colored days of old-fashioned whist. It is related of Lord Granville — with whom Deschappelles, the famous French whist prodigy, wanted to play partners, for any stake, against two archangels — that, at a single sitting, he lost ninety-five thousand dollars at Graham's Club. He afterward confessed that at one period of his life he was ahead at whist to the pretty tune of five hundred thousand dollars, but, shortly before his death, he

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

mournfully admitted that he would have made, on the whole, a better income as a journeyman glazier. Charles James Fox thought little of winning or losing a small fortune in a night. Major Aubrey, at Graham's, lost one hundred and fifty thousand dollars at a sitting. Beau Brummell is said to have won upward of one hundred thousand dollars in a night from one Drummond, "a mere banker." Lord Chesterfield lost a million dollars at Crockford's within a week's time.

Such gains and losses as these are, of course, in our eyes, preposterous and reprehensible. "Cavendish" used to say that, "at whist a small stake is sometimes a mental catalysis," but I might add that a very heavy stake too often involves a — shall we say? — moral obliquity. If we play according to our means (and I beseech my readers never to play for more than they are comfortably prepared to lose), we shall come to no great harm at bridge. We may regret to see Mr. X. lose more than he can afford, but our regrets are tempered by the conviction that he is a fool. We usually think that a man who has lost

GAINS AND LOSSES

more than he can pay is either a simpleton or a rogue. No man should gamble who is not prepared to pay up, *instantly*. In short, the game of bridge should always be played for ready money. Credit is a bad thing at cards.

I once made some such remarks as these to an Englishman, a proverbial gambler and "waster." His reply was as enlightening as it was naïve.

"My dear fellow," he said, "there's no earthly fun in bridge unless you *are* playing for more than you can afford. If you know that you can pay up at the end, like a blooming banker, there's no sting in the game at all. It's only when you haven't the 'ready' that a rubber isn't an awful bore."

CHAPTER V

IN GAY PAREE

IN Paris the rage of bridge is just now at its highest point. One hears of nothing but bridge, in the papers, at dinner parties, in hotels, clubs and even in the cafés. Here is a very curious experience which there befell a friend of mine — Count P. He had met, at the Railroad Club in Paris, a very likable and talented young Armenian with whom he struck up quite a friendship, and who, it developed, was a very fair bridge-player. After playing with him on one or two occasions and finding him a most agreeable partner, he was delighted to receive an invitation from him to dine at his house on the Avenue Kléber. The Armenian explained that his father was in Smyrna, but that his sister and mother were devoted to bridge and that the dinner would be an informal affair and merely a pretext for a few friendly rubbers.

IN GAY PAREE

Count P. accepted with alacrity and presented himself, at a little after eight, at their "hotel" — (in Paris any large house is called a "hotel"). The ladies were excellent linguists and altogether charming dinner companions. After a rather fanciful dinner, which consisted largely of pilaff and matzoon, and while smoking Turkish cigarettes — the ladies were accomplished smokers — and drinking Turkish coffee, the young man explained that the ladies did not play for very high points, as it was against their principles. They seemed of the highest order of culture and refinement, and my friend was, of course, ready to fall in with their views regarding the matter of stakes.

The mother finally suggested that twenty-cent points — one franc — was a very good figure to fix upon. The Frenchman, who never liked to play over ten-cent points, protested as politely as he could, saying that he could not increase his points, and suggested ten cents as the basis of play, to which everybody finally agreed.

The game went on smoothly enough for a few hands. During the play of a difficult

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

hand, however, the count was horrified to catch his partner, the young lady of the house, deliberately peeking at the dealer's hand. Shortly after this she claimed an extra trick, after the cards had been gathered. There was some slight discussion about the matter and the claim was finally disallowed.

A little later, it being his partner's deal, he distinctly saw her change the cut. Gradually it began to dawn upon him that the polished and cultivated young lady was nothing but an ordinary cheat.

What was he to do? He was winning; his gains were come by dishonestly, and yet, as a guest in the house he could not very well complain or make a scene in the bosom of the family. He was under their roof-tree, and had just partaken generously of their pilaff and matzoon.

His next shock came when it was his turn to deal. The mother arose, while he was picking up his hand, and, lighting a fresh cigarette, deliberately stood behind him and looked at his cards. Another favorite trick of hers was to moan audibly when a suit was led by her partner, which did not exactly coin-

IN GAY PAREE

cide with her ideas of the hand. In this way she kept her partner tolerably well informed, throughout the evening, as to the cards which she held.

The count began to feel very nervous and ill at ease. Finally he was greatly surprised to hear his partner accuse her mother of tapping on her brother's foot, evidently some prepared signal between them for a special lead — trumps, or clubs, or whatever the suit might be. The poor Frenchman was non-plused and thought of pleading a headache and throwing his cards upon the table in despair. The luck was suddenly running against him and the nervous strain, due to his distressing discoveries, was beginning to tell on him. He finished the rubber, however, paid his inconsiderable losses and politely made his excuses to the ladies. As he was leaving the room the mother called out to him: "Count P., you must come again, and you must be prepared to play for a little higher stakes."

In the ante-room, while putting on his coat, the Frenchman turned to the Armenian, and, in a burst of candor, said:

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

"My dear fellow, you must forgive me if I speak to you with the utmost frankness. I can never play in this house again."

"Oh," he answered, "I know what you mean! They cheat! Of course they do; I meant to tell you, before we began, that we always cheat, when we play at home. We think that bridge without cheating is no sport at all. I must apologize, though, for the ladies. They do it so clumsily! Why, anybody could detect them. They do it so badly that it is really absurd — but you should see my father. He is too wonderful at it. No one could possibly detect *him*."

"And you," said the Frenchman, aghast, "do you cheat, too?"

"With my family, *always*, but at the club or in a friend's house, never — unless, of course, the cards are running *very* badly against me."

There is another anecdote connected with French bridge, but this time the story abounds in fervored gallantry. The scene is of course laid in Paris, the chosen home of all exotic lovmaking and sweet-scented mendacity.

The Duchess de L——t, at the time of our

IN GAY PAREE

story, was a bridge-fiend. She was a wealthy widow, living on the Rue Carnot, in Paris. She is now the wife of Count Henri de P——e and shares with him his beautiful chateau in a smiling valley beyond Limoges. Count P——e's wooing of the duchess was a long and desperate one. He stormed and besieged the fortress valiantly and persistently, but the widow would not, for a long time, capitulate. One of the objections which she humorously mentioned as weighing against him in her heart was that he was so stupid and forgetful at the bridge table.

"My poor friend," she playfully said to him on one occasion, "you cannot remember three cards out of thirteen. Your mind wanders like Eugène Sue's poor Jew. You are *distract*. You are forgetful. Go home. Adieu."

Now, while Henri de P——e was an execrable bridge player he was as gallant a lover as ever drank tea and, far from being discouraged, he saw in this playful little subterfuge of the fickle duchess, a glorious opportunity for his own sentimental advancement.

Arriving at his club on the Place de la Con-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

corde — the only club in Paris where one is still forced to blot one's letters with sand and poke the quill into buckshot — he sat down at a writing table, ordered an absinthe frappé and wrote to the duchess a heart-breaking *billet-doux*.

It must here be explained that, in common with all amorous Frenchmen, the count addressed his ladylove by a multitude of pet names, most of them the names of domestic animals, familiar fruits, and truck vegetables, but these loving personifications, while typically French, have little or nothing to do with bridge whist, so we must content ourselves by quoting only such portions of his burning missive as are germane to our subject!

Here follows the Frenchman's epistolary attack upon the widow's counterscarp and ramparts.

You ask me, my little (*here the count added the name of a very popular green vegetable*) why I am forgetful and distraight when I play bridge with you. How, my — *name of a common household pet* — can you ask? Gazing at those lips and eyes of yours is distracting enough, Heaven knows, but I

IN GAY PAREE

have even more than that to contend with. Yes, my beloved — *name of a feminine barnyard fowl* — it is impossible for me to think of the wretched game when I am at the little green table with you, because, when I count the cards, I always think there are only fifty-two weeks in the year in which to love you. When I see the suits, I think of the number of weeks in every long month until you shall return my love: the twelve picture cards, the wearisome months in every year that I must live without you, my — *name of a costly product of the best market gardens* — the tricks, the number of weeks in every quarter until we be made one. When I count the spots I find that there are twenty-nine dozen or as many spots as I have found ways of loving you. When I see a club it reminds me that this wretched place, where I now write, is the only home I have; when I see a heart — ah, my adorable little — *name of a humble beast of burden* — you can well guess what I think and feel then; a diamond, and I dream of that little hand and the ring that I long to buy for it; a spade and I am forced to admit that that is the only created thing that can separate us.

Each time I see a king, I think of what I should feel were you only to smile upon me; a queen, of your noble and adorable self; a knave, of every man who dares so much as to look at you; a ten, of those white and pretty little fingers of yours; a

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

nine, of the lives, like a cat's, that I would gladly sacrifice for you; of the eight, of the day of my birth, since which time I have ardently desired nothing but you; of the seven, of the days, from one Sunday to another, that I shall always remain loyal to you; of the six, of the days in every week in which others do not worship, but in which I shall passionately worship you; of the five, of all the five senses which ache within me when I am near you; of the four, of the four seasons of the year, in each of which seasons you are nearer the heart of loveliness than you were before; of the trey, of those three chaste kisses which are all that you have grudgingly permitted me to bestow upon you. When I see the deuce, our tragedy — the tragedy of two unhappy and separated lives — swims, like a fever, before me, and when I see the ace, I naturally and inevitably think oh, my — *name of a wild fruit product* — of you.

Deign to permit me, madame, humbly to lay at your thrice happy feet, etc.

I am glad to be able to add that this note scored a grand slam and a hundred aces with the widowed and fickle duchess and that it decided her to remain fickle and a widow and a duchess no longer.

A curious point has arisen in France con-

IN GAY PAREE

cerning scoring at bridge. It seems that a well-known card club in Paris is trying to change the value of a trick in no trumps. As originally played in the East, a trick in a no trumper counted ten points, and four aces in one hand counted eighty. This is as it should be, each count ascending two points at a time, but somebody who had learned the game, and learned it imperfectly, taught it to a class of players who did not stop to think about the matter very seriously, and the mistake has spread all over the world. I doubt very much, however, if the distinguished Frenchmen who compose the committee of the club in question will succeed in changing the rules, so as to count ten points for every trick in no trumps, instead of twelve.

It was in Paris that I first had the pleasure of meeting Monsieur R., one of the best bridge players at the Parisian Jockey Club. This particular Frenchman has the most extraordinary memory for cards that I have ever known. Once in playing a duplicate-bridge tournament in Paris he was barely beaten for the first prize by two English players. The next evening, at his club, he and

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

his partner were discussing the various hands and their play of them. He asked the waiter to fetch him a table and a pack of cards. He then proceeded to lay out, one after another, the twenty-four combined hands which he had played in the tournament. His partner told me that R. remembered them without any effort and that, as far as he could recall them, there was not a single error in the ninety-six individual hands.

Mr. Elwell, in New York, has a card brain so perfect that he can carry hundreds of hands in his head and remember them at incredible distances of time. To the ordinary player, this seems like magic, but feats of memory such as these are, of course, cast into the shade by the performances of certain well-known chess-players. Pillsbury, for instance, one of the greatest prodigies of chess that we have ever produced in this country, frequently played sixteen simultaneous blindfolded games of chess. Mr. William D. Guthrie, the New York lawyer, can repeat, word for word, the whole of "Paradise Lost." Maccaulay, on a wager, memorized the shopkeepers' signs on Piccadilly during a walk from

IN GAY PAREE

Green Park to Piccadilly Circus and, having successfully repeated them, he astonished his friends by repeating them backward.

I spoke recently to a feminine friend of mine about this extraordinary memory for cards that some people possessed, and I added that I could no more remember the bridge hands which I had played a week ago than I could fly. With a very provocative and charming smile, she replied:

“Well! If I were in *your* place I certainly should not *wish* to remember them.”

But, to return to Paris, I want to quote what I consider the most extraordinary single exhibition of politeness which I have ever witnessed at the bridge-table. It was at the Ritz Hotel in Paris, where I was playing with Prince de L., his wife, and Madame le T. This was my first bridge session in France and my knowledge of French, although fair, did not extend to the technical terms of bridge. In one of the very first hands that we played I remember making it a diamond, or, as I said in my feeble French, “*diamants.*” A little later I again declared “*diamants.*” During the whole course of the evening my

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

hosts, when they made it a diamond, always declared "*diamants*," notwithstanding the fact that such a term is never used by the French in playing bridge. The correct expression is, of course, "*carreaux*", but their innate sense of politeness prompted them to repeat, over and over again, the ridiculous blunder which I had so foolishly committed.

They are telling, in Paris, a most extraordinary story of how Monsieur Z. made 2500 francs at bridge.

The tale is a little complicated, but I shall attempt to make it clear. Some weeks ago four Frenchmen were playing a rubber at high stakes — five franc points, in the Cercle de L'Union, a fashionable Parisian club. The score was about even, and they were beginning the rubber game. It was A's deal, and, as he was throwing around the cards, the third hand was called to the telephone. A little later he returned and said that he must go home at once on very important business. He also added that he would prefer to transfer his money interest in the rubber to some one else, if such a thing could be managed.

IN GAY PAREE

He could not wait an instant, and, after apologizing, hurriedly left the club.

The three players then wandered around trying to get a man to take his place. In the far corner of the library they came upon M. Z., a very rosy gentleman who was sleeping audibly. He was, alas, decidedly "under the influence," (an extremely rare phenomenon in French clubs). They finally waked him up, however, and explained the matter to him. He said he would play, and he insisted on assuming his share of the money interest in the game. This arrangement they all agreed to, notwithstanding his condition, which apparently bordered on dissolution.

No sooner had they all seated themselves than A picked up the cards, which he had dealt before his friend's departure, and declared no trumps, on the king, queen, and seven of hearts; the ace and king of diamonds; two small clubs, and the ace, king, queen and three other little spades. At this point dummy jumped up and went to the cigar-counter for a cigarette. While he was purchasing this, Y., the leader, doubled, holding seven clubs with the three top honors.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

B, the dummy, now returned from his hunt for a cigarette, and, hearing that the make had been doubled, redoubled it in turn. It seems that he had stupidly supposed Z the third hand, to be the doubler, and, seeing the ace of hearts and some little diamond strength in his hand, and knowing that A was not at all a rash maker, he had thought it wise to "lift the ante, just once." He looked at Z and, to his horror, beheld that he was fast asleep. He now realized his blunder, but said nothing. Here the leader, who was a pretty daring gambler, looked at his seven clubs and went back at his opponents with another double.

The dealer, having sure control of all the suits, except the clubs, began to think a little! What had his partner — B, the dummy — redoubled on? Dummy must have the clubs well stopped, he argued, or he would not have redoubled. If his partner had the clubs, then he, A, was certain to win two or three by cards. He accordingly doubled back. The leader took one last plunge and redoubled again. Dummy, who now fully realized that it was the leader who had doubled and not

IN GAY PAREE

the snoring third hand, said: "Enough," and the leader played his ace of clubs.

When Dummy's hand went down it contained three small clubs, to the ten. A united effort was now made to arouse Z from his deathlike slumber, but all to no avail. He was obviously *hors-de-combat*. The leader was a little nervous but he finally showed his seven clubs and claimed the odd, as, with the three small clubs in the dummy, his clubs must all be good.

The dealer admitted the soft impeachment and it was decided to allow the leader and his sleeping partner the odd trick. Z was now escorted to an easy chair and permitted to go on with his much-needed rest. The rubber was added up. The odd trick alone made a difference of 1920 francs: to which they added 500 francs for the rubber and 90 francs (which was the difference in favor of X and Z before the hands were picked up). The score totaled 2510 francs, checks for which amount were promptly and sorrowfully drawn by A and B.

A now went over to the sofa, stuffed his check in Z's pocket, and begged the card-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

room waiter to draw Mr. Z's attention to the check, as soon as he came out of his little doze. As it was very late, the three men left the club, and the poor card-room waiter was allowed to "sit up with the body."

In the course of an hour or two Mr. Z opened his eyes, in deep wonder. Where was he? When the check was pointed out to him, he was slightly incredulous.

"Some mistake," he said. "I never even picked up my cards—much less played them."

"I can't say as to that, sir," said the boy, "but the gentlemen assured me that you had won the money, sir."

This is the only case I know of where a man has played a whole game of bridge, won over five hundred dollars, and never looked at one of his cards.

Before leaving the subject of Parisian bridge I must say that the "cunning" game, which is unfortunately beginning to prevail there, is, in my opinion, a delusion and a snare. The standard of play used to be high there, but the French have gone very far wrong, it seems to me, in deviating from a

IN GAY PAREE

sensible adherence to established conventions and indulging in a fantastic and altogether irregular method of play.

For instance, in Paris to-day, the best players do not open the fourth best card of their long suit. They claim that it gives too much valuable information to their adversaries. Again they *will* lead the lowest of touching honors, instead of the highest; they open short suits; they false card, over finesse, declare gamblers' makes and switch suits in a no-trump declaration with a rapidity which is not only terrifying but costly.

Altogether, Parisian bridge has developed into a barbarous game, at best.

CHAPTER VI

CLEVER CHEATS AND CHEATING

I SHALL begin this chapter by quoting what I think the most extraordinary bit of impudence and rascality which it has ever been my fortune to hear of at the bridge-table. This occurred a few years ago at a pigeon club in Monte Carlo.

Four gentlemen, all well known along the Riviera, were playing bridge for fairly large stakes. The game was composed of Lord E., an Englishman, Prince G., a Greek, and two Frenchmen. Lord E. owed the table — from previous rubbers — about five hundred francs.

The prince dealt and declared “no trumps.” The score was one game all and love all on the third game. The Greek’s hand consisted of: The queen and jack of hearts; eight clubs to the ace, king, queen; the lone ace of diamonds; and the ace and a small spade.

CHEATS AND CHEATING

Lord E.—being the leader and holding ten hearts to the ace, king — doubled. The dealer declared himself satisfied and E. led his ace of hearts. Dummy had no hearts. E.'s partner played a low heart and G., the dealer, followed with the jack.

E., seeing that the queen *must* fall on the next round, exultantly played his king. When it got to be the prince's turn to follow, he hesitated for some time and finally played a small spade. As nobody had followed suit and as somebody *must* have the queen of hearts, E. looked at his partner and asked him if he had no hearts, to which he replied: "No hearts." The leader looked at the prince and then at his partner and said: "Partner, please examine, *carefully*, every card in your hand and tell me if you have a heart." His partner then repeated that he was void of hearts.

Lord E. turned to the prince and said: "I must ask you to follow suit on this trick. I insist on your playing the queen of hearts."

The Greek nonchalantly replied, in French: "I think I know the rules of this game as well as you do. If I revoke I am certainly bound to pay the penalty. As a matter of

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

fact, you have no business to interest yourself with my play, other than to demand from me the usual penalties in case I infract any of the rules."

Lord E. still insisted that the prince must play his queen of hearts. The prince remarked that Lord E. owed the table five hundred francs from previous rubbers and that if he was dissatisfied with the game he could pay his indebtedness and stop playing. E. thereupon promptly pulled out some notes, paid his debt and rose to leave the table.

A tremendous discussion then took place. In this dispute, dummy, of course, was not supposed to take any part, but, being a gentleman of honor, and learning that Prince G. had actually held the queen of hearts, he told him that he feared he would thereafter have to forego the pleasure of playing with him and pointedly left the room, together with Lord E. and the Frenchman who had been playing third hand.

Prince G. was, from that time on, pointed out as a suspiciously slippery card player all along the Riviera.

Here was a case where it was perfectly evi-

CHEATS AND CHEATING

dent that a man could save a considerable sum of money — roughly, thirty dollars, at ten-cent points — by revoking once in the heart suit. By resorting to this ruse, he was sure of one trick in hearts, eight in clubs, the ace of spades, and the ace of diamonds — or five by cards. Three of these tricks he would have to lose as a penalty for his revoke; but, according to the rules, his side would go to 28 — the revoking side can *never* go game — whereas, by following to the second round of hearts, he was certain to lose four by cards, the game, and the rubber.

Strange as it may seem, I have often heard Prince G.'s conduct condoned by men of unquestionably good character.

“Why is this,” they have argued, “any worse than hiding an unintentional revoke and trying to deceive the adversaries by throwing down the guilty card at the end of the hand in an idle and careless way and hurriedly quitting the trick?”

Here is a famous anecdote of Lord de Ros who, some years ago, in the days of straight whist, was a redoubtable player in England. Notwithstanding his skill, he simply *could*

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

not play fair and had a distressing habit of slipping an ace on the bottom of the pack — after the cut. In this way he was always sure of the ace of trumps when it was his turn to deal. He was finally detected in the fraud and left London precipitatedly for the Continent, where, after a few years, he died. A well-known wag in London suggested, as a suitable epitaph for the unfortunate nobleman, the following lines:

Here lies Lord de Ros —
In confident expectation
Of the last trump.

A growing body of converts to the game of bridge are the professional gamblers. Time was when a roving, talented and sociable pair of gamblers needed only a marked pack of cards and a knowledge of the mysteries of poker to make a handsome living on a trans-Atlantic liner or a Chicago "limited"; but we have changed all that, and no considerable or self-respecting gambler can now afford to be without a thorough mastery of the intricacies of bridge.

A recent proof of this, which came under

CHEATS AND CHEATING

my own observation, is worth relating here, as the swindle was perpetrated with so much daring and ease that it deceived one of the cleverest and astutest Americans of our day.

A year ago last June Mr. Charles M. Schwab sailed for Europe on the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*. On the second day out a certain Mr. A., a dapper, suave and plausible young man, introduced himself as the son of a very old — and deceased — friend of Mr. Schwab's. Mr. Schwab, who is a pattern of good nature, was, of course, delighted to make his acquaintance and was also exceedingly polite to Mr. B., the traveling companion of his new-found friend. B.—how singular is the net of Destiny! — turned out to be related to another of Mr. Schwab's friends.

Mr. A. yawned and deplored the fact that there was, apparently, no bridge on board and mildly suggested a quiet little game of double dummy before luncheon — an invitation which Mr. Schwab smilingly accepted. The points were to be fifty cents, a trifling sum for so rich a man as Mr. A. pretended to be.

Now, the best part of this narrative is that

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

it is actually true. Mr. Schwab is said to be the best double-dummy player in America — with the possible exception of Mr. Elwell. He has played the game a great deal and is letter perfect, not only in the chances of making or leaving, but also in the art of combining his two hands.

I watched the game, from the "sidelines," for three successive mornings, and I should say that Mr. Schwab was a ten-per-cent. better player than his suave opponent. Not to make this story too long, I shall simply state that Mr. Schwab lost nineteen straight rubbers. How the marvel was accomplished it would be difficult to say, but I could not fail to notice that Mr. B. was usually close beside his friend.

Occasionally, however, B. would leave the smoking-room, under some pretext or other, for a minute or two and return to his post beside Mr. A. with some hopeful little remark about the state of the weather, the proximity of a school of porpoises, or the likelihood of a good "run."

Was B. in the possession of a few extra packs of cards? Did he arrange them deft-

CHEATS AND CHEATING

ly for A.? Were the cards marked? Was A. a conjurer? These are questions which I am utterly unable to answer, but I believe that Mr. Schwab would have gone on with the game, in blind ignorance of the deception which was being played upon him, but for one preposterous error of judgment on the part of the son of his late lamented friend.

Success had apparently gone to A.'s head like wine, and he was evidently convinced that he could perpetrate *any* outrage upon the good-natured steel king. Mr. Schwab had dealt and made it a heart, with the five top honors in hearts and the four top honors in diamonds and clubs, and no spades. A. had doubled and Mr. Schwab had naturally redoubled. The farce went on until Mr. Schwab, in mild amazement, cried "enough."

Naturally, as my readers have long ago guessed, Mr. A. held the eight low hearts and the five top spades, so that, by pounding away at his spades, he was bound to make two by cards. This was a little too much for even Mr. Schwab's good nature, and the game broke up in a strained and awkward silence.

I was so curious to discover the methods

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

of this sharper that I challenged him to two rubbers — at much lower points — and rather expected that he would let me win, as the stakes were hardly worth his while, but I never won a game in the two rubbers which I played with him, nor did, afterward, Mr. K. or Mr. N., two “ added starters ” in the race to get experience. A. actually won, in four mornings, twenty-seven straight rubbers and about two thousand three hundred dollars in cash.

Some of the passengers — one of whom testified that these same gentlemen had crossed with him about a month before in the same easterly direction — urged Mr. Schwab not to pay A. a dollar until he had very carefully looked him up, but I believe that, after a little consideration of the matter, Mr. Schwab paid A. all that A. had stolen from him.

I am, I must confess, grateful to A. for one thing. He taught me the best way of playing double dummy bridge that I have ever seen. The trouble with the game is the inconvenience of changing seats, looking at your adversary's dummy, leading from two sides of the board, etc., etc.

CHEATS AND CHEATING

A.'s solution of these difficulties was a very simple one. The player was always to lead and never the player's dummy. For instance: I am dealing and my opponent is on my left. I look at my hand and make it and my opponent leads, unless he wishes to double, *from his own hand*, and before looking at his dummy. After his lead we lay down our dummies and proceed with the game.

If I can't make it in my own hand, I look at my dummy and make it according to rule—that is, three aces is a compulsory no-trumper, otherwise I make it my longest suit. In case two of dummy's suits are even, I make it the suit that totals the greatest number of pips. After I have made it, in dummy, my opponent leads. At the next hand my opponent will make it in his own hand and I will lead, or his dummy will make it and I will still lead from my hand.

In other words, the players always lead and never the dummies. The players alone can double and never the dummies. The players alone can deal and never the dummies. The players alone can declare no-trumps without

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

three aces. The leader must always lead before looking at his dummy.

This makes the game a very simple, rapid, and amusing one. The only thing against this method of play is that the leader is often forced to lead at a disadvantage, but, after all, the rule is as fair for one player as for another, and this method of leading saves a lot of useless complications.

Here is another very interesting example of the wiles of a professional gambler. The yarn is an even more picturesque one than that of which the unfortunate Mr. Schwab was the hero on the *Cecilie*.

On this particular occasion the shorn lamb, who was not protected from the winds of misery, was Mr. H. D. Condie, the St. Louis merchant, who is a sound and careful player and who has played the game for eight years, both in this country and abroad. I shall tell the story as Mr. Condie narrated it to me.

He was coming down from Mackinac to Chicago on the steamer *Northland* and was approached by a polite young man — they are usually young and *always* polite — who asked him if he would make up a four at bridge.

CHEATS AND CHEATING

Mr. Condie, not being in the humor for it, declined. The next morning, after breakfast, he asked him again, and this time Mr. Condie accepted, agreeing, however, to play only two rubbers.

They thereupon went to the state-room of the stranger's "fat and jolly" friend, where they found two men awaiting them. Five-cent points were agreed upon, and the first rubber went against Mr. Condie by a close margin. On the second rubber he was twenty-four to sixteen and one game in.

It was Mr. Condie's deal, and he was sitting west. His opponent to the left touched his arm just as the cards were being cut, and drew his attention to a passing boat alongside of them. Without suspecting any fraud, he cut the pack which was presented to him, and dealt the cards. He was very soon staggered to see what a powerful hand he had dealt himself. His cards were: The six highest diamonds; the three highest clubs; the three highest spades and the lone king of hearts.

He promptly declared a diamond and was, after a little hesitation, doubled by the leader, who, in turn, was promptly redoubled by Mr.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Condie. At this point, third hand exposed the eight of diamonds and asked, in a whisper, if Mr. Condie knew that that suit, meaning diamonds, was trumps?

The dealer scanned his hand and saw that he had the six high trumps, and figured that, as third hand had one trump, the leader could not have more than six. The dealer complained, however, of the exposure, and told third hand that he did not care to see his cards and presumed that the leader did not either.

The leader, instead of going on with the doubling, offered to bet Mr. Condie fifty dollars even that he would beat him to the odd trick. The bet was accepted, and the leader led the ace of hearts, capturing the dealer's lone king. As it afterward turned out the leader's hand consisted of the six low diamonds and seven hearts to the ace, queen, jack, ten; no spades, and no clubs. Dummy went down with six spades to the jack, ten; one low heart, and six low clubs.

As a matter of course, the leader had only to go on leading his hearts in order to win the odd trick and the fifty dollars. I suppose that, as Mr. Condie's attention was called to

CHEATS AND CHEATING

the passing boat through the port-hole, a prepared pack had been deftly substituted. Imagine the horror and chagrin in the camp of the enemy if Mr. Condie, being twenty-four and suspecting that all was not well in Denmark, had declared spades and scored up a small slam, the game, and the rubber. One cannot help hoping to live until such a golden chance to confuse the wicked is offered one.

As it was, Mr. Condie sadly paid his bet, and, with an increased respect for the wisdom of others proceeded on his weary way to his stateroom.

There is a special ban and blight that rests upon a man who cheats at cards. It is the one unforgivable sin. A man may beat his wife or refuse to support his children but, if he peeks at bridge, he is lost to the end of eternity. In England a man may owe his tailor or his cheesemonger or his bootmaker, but he is everlastingly ostracized if he owes money at cards.

Perhaps the most famous scandal connected with cheating at whist in all of English history is the celebrated case of Lord de Ros which I have already mentioned. At the time

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

of the furore, following the exposure, Lord Hertford was asked what he would do if he saw a man cheating at cards.

"Bet on him, of course," was his lordship's reply.

Lord de Ros' "system" was only available once in four deals — when he dealt! At such a crisis he would palm an ace and slip it on the bottom of the pack. He somehow marked all the other aces with his fingernails so that he could note, while dealing, to whom they fell. After the exposure of the fraud there was, at White's Club a vulgar "outsider" whom De Ros had snubbed on one or two occasions. He remarked to one of De Ros' friends, in a very insulting tone, that he felt rather sorry for poor old De Ros, and would certainly leave his card on him, but he was afraid that De Ros would mark it.

"I think you can safely take the risk," said his lordship's friend. "I am certain that he would not think your card a high enough honor."

This *bon mot* is, I think, usually attributed to Lord Alvanley.

Another one, almost as good, is also apro-

CHEATS AND CHEATING

pos of poor De Ros. One evening he won enough from Lord G. at a single sitting of whist to build a small house in the country. Lord G., when the house was shown to him, was asked how he would like to live in it. "Not at all," was the reply. "I should not deem it safe. It is, after all, only a house of cards."

There is, in a Chicago club, a very large game — usually fifty-cent stakes. At an afternoon session, Mr. T., who was playing third hand, took such a desperate, but successful finesse, that his fourth-hand adversary uttered a little whistle of suspicion and surprise. T.'s partner offered to bet the whistling gentleman one hundred dollars that T. had a sound and sufficient reason for taking the finesse. The bet was taken, and Mr. T. was at once appealed to for his reasons.

"Why," turning to fourth hand, "my dear man," he murmured, "I saw every card in your hand."

There seems to be no end to the stories one hears of cheating at bridge. We used to believe that these tales were all malicious inventions, but, of late, the scandals have in-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

creased at such a rate that we are inclined to think that there must be a pinch of truth in them somewhere.

For instance: In a well-known card club in New York there was, until quite recently, a gentleman who had a morbid love of cutting low for partners and for the first deal. This little passion of his cost him his position in New York society and, incidentally, his membership in the aforementioned club.

It fell out in this wise. He — Mr. X. we shall call him — found that by putting an ace on the top of a pack and covering it with four cards, the ace would become, very naturally, the fifth card from the top. By then riffing the pack on the table and choosing the fifth card in the spiral, or fan, he was certain to get an ace and, presumably, the deal. The frequency with which this polished gentleman cut the first deal finally became the matter of heated gossip and discussion in his club and, one winter's evening, it was proposed to watch him very carefully and take action against him if the suspicions of the gossips proved true. The three gentlemen composing the house committee asked Mr. X. to make up a

CHEATS AND CHEATING

rubber at fairly high points. Three times, within the next hour or so, did Mr. X. reach over, after a completed rubber, and pick up a pack of cards, only to shuffle them, look, every now and again, at the bottom cards, cut them, place a few cards on top and otherwise manipulate them, and, *mirabile dictu*, three times did he cut an ace or a deuce. When the séance was over the three gentlemen retired to the hall and held a short consultation. All three of them were convinced that Mr. X. had prepared the packs before cutting, but none of them wanted the unpleasant honor of bringing charges against him.

In the course of two or three days Mr. X. reappeared at his club and was handed the following sealed note by the doorman:

The house committee has reason to believe that the governors of this club would accept your resignation if you were to hand it in before their next regular meeting.

The next day his resignation was in the hands of the governors. Mr. X. has always been considered a good enough fellow, and his business reputation has been of the highest, but in such a trifling and petty thing as five-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

cent bridge he simply could not run straight.

Another scandal now going the rounds is that of Mr. and Mrs. T., the young married couple in Philadelphia who played such first rate bridge, who were so pleasant to play with, and who won such a very considerable amount of money at the game in the politest circles of Philadelphia society. That they have lately come such a fearful cropper is due to Mrs. A., a lady who teaches bridge in the Quaker City.

It seems that the T.'s always insisted on playing together. Their reason for refusing to be pitted against each other at the bridge table was the reason given by so many married couples. As they both liked to play for money it was absurd for them to gamble against one another, as they had a common purse for their gains and losses at bridge, etc., etc.

Now, before proceeding with this recital, I must pause to advise married couples always to play at different tables if it can be conveniently arranged. I know that it seems absurd to suppose that ladies and gentlemen

CHEATS AND CHEATING

might be suspected of having private signals at the card table, but it is just as well to give the gossips, malicious or otherwise, no ground for their suspicions.

Mr. and Mrs. T., up to this year, had had a very lucky career at bridge and had become famous for their skill and daring at the game. When Mrs. A., a prominent bridge teacher in Philadelphia, heard on all sides that the T.s were the best players in the city, she became a little nettled as she was sure that she and another lady, a pupil of hers, could defeat them at every point of the game.

A match was accordingly arranged at the house of the young married couple. Mrs. A., who was comfortably ahead of the game as a result of her successful winter of teaching, suggested twenty-cent points and the match was soon under way at these stakes. After two or three rubbers it occurred to Mrs. A. that the T.s had mastered their game almost too perfectly. They seemed invariably to open the right suit; they always left the make when dummy seemed to demand it; whenever they doubled a make they invariably

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

floated gracefully on to victory. Mrs. A.'s eyes were beginning to open and her little store of cash to vanish.

With the score eighteen all Mrs. T. dealt, hesitated for an instant only, and left the make to dummy, who declared hearts, with seven hearts and five honors. When the hand had been played out and when the dealer had scored up a small slam, Mrs. A. observed acidly to Mrs. T.:

"How was it that, having six diamonds in your hand with the four top honors, you happened to pass it to your husband?"

"Oh," said Mrs. T. "I always somehow hate to make it a diamond."

A little later, with the score love all, Mr. T. dealt himself three aces and a guarded king. Notwithstanding this compulsory no trumper he left it to his wife, who declared hearts, with seven hearts and four honors. This was a little too much for Mrs. A. She had not seen a trace of a signal between the T.s, but rage and suspicion had gotten the best of her. After the hand she rose majestically from the table and said that she must refuse to go on with the rubber. On being ques-

CHEATS AND CHEATING

tioned as to her reason for this she simply observed: "I don't like your makes" and, with her partner, she calmly and sedately left the house after settling for every rubber but the last.

That evening she confided the adventure to a feminine friend, under a strict promise of secrecy and the next morning it was all over Philadelphia. On the following evening it was discussed in all the clubs and suburbs, and finally reached a New York society journal, where it was printed with the usual circumlocution and vivid coloring peculiar to periodicals of this class.

The next move was a suit brought by the T.s against Mrs. A. for defamation of character, and a threatened countersuit against the T.s for obtaining money under false pretenses. A short while ago the whole pother was smoothed over by a written apology from Mrs. A., but the T.s now find it very difficult to scare up a rubber in Philadelphia. Indeed, the sympathy of most people is with Mrs. A. as, perhaps, it should be, in view of the two startling makes that were left to dummy by Mr. and Mrs. T.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Of course if two perfect bridge players play much together, their game, to the onlookers, seems almost like necromancy. It is extraordinary what subtle mysteries their brains seem to divine. Of this there can be no question, but it takes a little more than skill to pick up a hand with six diamonds to four top honors and leave the make to dummy, who has, incredible as it may seem, seven hearts and five honors. Skill will do many wonderful things, but it won't see through the backs of average playing cards.

Before leaving the matter of moral obliquity at bridge I should like to ask my readers to settle for me a little question of this kind. As everybody knows, it is a great advantage to cut the first deal in a rubber and the lowest card cut will insure that particular cutter the deal. Now, it has been discovered, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that when a new pack of cards is riffled for the cut on a cloth bridge table, those cards in the fan, or spiral, the backs of which are most exposed to view, are, more often than not, the high cards, while those with the least part of their backs exposed are the low. This apparently inex-

CHEATS AND CHEATING

plicable phenomenon is due, I am told, to the greater amount of paint on the high cards. Now, by choosing the least exposed cards in the fan we can often secure the deal. I have seen it work eight times out of ten and I dare say that seven out of ten would be a fair average for the success of the experiment. Query: Is it right for a player to select his card in this way? I know dozens of honest men who do it, regardless of whether the other players at the table know the trick or not. Is it ethical to practice this seemingly harmless little artifice?

CHAPTER VII

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS — AND HISTORICAL

THERE is, in all the realms of life and literature, but one female whist player who is 'worthy of our utmost esteem and admiration. It is hardly necessary for me to add that this creature is a purely mythical character — the child of a great man's brain. I allude, of course, to Sarah Battle, that altogether delightful old lady to whom Charles Lamb has introduced us in his perennial "Essays of Elia." Will my readers forgive me if I bring her before them and reintroduce her to them? She is so rare and resolute a character that I am certain that a second meeting with her will superinduce no "surfeit of Lamb."

"A clear fire, a clean hearth, and the rigor of the game." This was the celebrated *wish* of old Sarah Battle — now with God — who, next to her devotions, loved a good game of whist. She was none of your lukewarm gamesters, your half-and-

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

half players, who have no objection to make up a rubber; who affirm that they have no pleasure in winning; that they like to win one game and lose another; that they can while away an hour very agreeably at a card table, but are indifferent whether they play or not; and will desire an adversary, who has slipped a wrong card, to take it up and play another. These insufferable triflers are the curse of a table. One of these flies will spoil a whole pot. Of such it may be said that they do not play at cards, but only play at playing at them.

Sarah Battle was none of that breed. She detested them, as I do, from her heart and soul, and would not, save upon a striking emergency, willingly seat herself at the same table with them. She loved a thorough-paced partner, a determined enemy. She took, and gave, no concessions. She hated favors. She never made a revoke, nor ever passed it over in her adversary without exacting the utmost forfeiture. She fought a good fight; cut and thrust. No inducement could ever prevail upon her to play at any game where chance entered into the composition, *for nothing*. She sat bolt upright; and neither showed you her cards, nor desired to see yours.

I never in my life — and I knew Sarah Battle many of the best years of it — saw her take out her snuffbox when it was her turn to play; or snuff a

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

candle in the middle of a game; or ring for a servant, till it was fairly over. She never introduced, or connived at, miscellaneous conversation during its process. As she emphatically observed, cards were cards; and if I ever saw unmingled distaste in her fine last-century countenance, it was at the airs of a young gentleman of a literary turn, who had been with difficulty persuaded to take a hand; and who, in his excess of candor, declared that he thought there was no harm in unbending the mind now and then, after serious studies, in recreations of that kind! She could not bear to have her noble occupation, to which she wound up her faculties, considered in that light. It was her business, her duty, the thing that she came into the world to do — and she did it.

I believe that, in the days of old-fashioned whist there was once a *real* woman who was *supposed* to be an ideal and satisfactory player and partner, but she played her whist nearly a hundred and twenty years ago — a period too remote for exact scrutiny or substantiation. I think that I have only to mention her name to cause a look of wonderment to spread upon the faces of my readers. I allude to Anna Laetitia Aikin, afterward Mrs. Barbauld. That she was a versatile, exact, and brilliant

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

exponent of whist, all the writers of that time are agreed. It seems difficult for us to believe that the elegant and distinguished authoress of the helpful "Evenings at Home" and "Early Lessons for Children," could have been, at one and the same time, Mrs. Barbauld, the most moral of the preceptors of the young, and "Bob Short," the pseudonymous author of that famous little treatise on whist which was first published in 1792 and which ran through thirty fat editions in as many lean years.

Let the ministers and Sunday supplements, who preach and print all this rubbish about the essential and innate immorality of bridge among women, please take notice that of Mrs. Barbauld, the first great feminine whist player, it was said by a polished writer of her time that "she engaged complacency and inspired esteem"; and that by another it was stated that "the simplicity of her life and manners and the purity of her soul are well represented in the works which have made her name a household word in England, and one to which the cause of education is perpetually indebted."

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Before we leave our historical researches I must add that among the brilliant lovers and defenders of the game in the olden days, there are three names that shine out with particular luminosity and splendor — Disraeli, Bulwer-Lytton, and Talleyrand. It was the latter who said, upon one occasion: "You don't know whist, young man? What a sad old age you are storing up for yourself."

It is related of him that he was "a crafty and cunning player," a statement to which his whole career gives an unmistakable color of truth. Bulwer-Lytton was "exceedingly slow in his play, and, at times, seemed absent and unable to concentrate his thoughts on the matter before him," but that he loved the game well, anybody who has read "My Novel" will be ready to testify. To us this book is one of the most beguiling novels in the world and the description in it of the whist scene and the players that composed it — the squire, the parson, the captain, and Mrs. Hazeldean — is an altogether delightful one.

Disraeli's famous rubber in "The Infernal Marriage" is not half so entertaining a scene

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

as that in "My Novel," although we are told that his skill at the game was vastly greater than Lord Lytton's, and that he always stood ready, as was the dashing custom of the time, to play for a heavy stake and to "double it, after every rubber, until the most daring had been satisfied."

While I am on the subject of old-fashioned whist I cannot forbear quoting what is probably the best known problem-hand in whist. It is comparatively simple, and is usually known as the Duke of Cumberland's hand, as he is said to have lost thirty thousand pounds on it. It is particularly well known in America, as Mr. Elwell has used the hand on the outside cover of his first book, "Elwell on Bridge."

The duke's hand was dealt in the following utterly improbable way: King, jack, 9, 7 of hearts; ace, king, queen, jack of clubs; ace, king, queen of diamonds; ace, king of spades. Hearts are trumps. The duke's hand lay to the north, between the hands of West and East, the sharpers who were about to rook him. It was West's turn to lead.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

The puzzle is so to arrange the remaining thirty-nine cards that North's hand can never make a trick, struggle as he may.

The solution of the problem is, of course, as follows:

West, the leader, has the five lowest hearts and no spades. East, third hand, has the ace, queen, 10, 8 of hearts and nine spades. Dealer (South) has two spades and no hearts.

Trick 1.—West leads a heart.

Trick 2.—East leads a spade and West trumps.

Trick 3.—West leads a heart.

Trick 4.—East leads a spade and West trumps.

Trick 5.—West leads his last heart.

Trick 6.—East leads his last heart, takes out North's only remaining trump, and then makes seven spades, or a total of thirteen tricks.

The cover of Mr. Elwell's later book, "Advanced Bridge," has also given rise to a good deal of speculation. People have so often suggested that it was some ingenious and far-fetched bridge-problem that I am glad to be able to state that it is only a pictorial illustra-

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

tion of Pope's well-known lines in "The Rape of the Lock."

"The knave of diamonds tries his wily arts.
And wins, oh, shameful chance, the queen of
hearts."

While whist was known to Pope, it was a closed book to Shakespeare, although I find a passage in "Antony and Cleopatra," Act IV., Scene 12, which, in a punning way, mentions the Elizabethan game of "triumph," or "trump," from which game whist was slowly developed and evolved.

The lines I speak of are as follows:

My good *knave*, Eros, now thy captain is
Even such a body; here I am Antony:
Yet cannot hold this visible shape, my *knave*.
I made these wars for Egypt; and the *queen*
Whose *heart* I thought I had, for she had mine;
Which, whilst it was mine, had annexed unto't
A million more, now *lost*,—she, Eros, has
Packed cards with Cæsar, and *false played* my glory
Unto an enemy's *triumph*.

My readers have all of them, I suppose, heard a great deal, in bridge, about the rule of eleven. I may be permitted to add a few

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

words about this uncanny and invaluable aid to bridge.

The rule of eleven is simple enough in practice, but it only applies, of course, to leads of the fourth best card in a suit.

Let us say that A. is the leader and that he invariably leads the fourth best card of his longest suit. Deduct the number, or pip, or value of the card led from eleven and the difference will be the number of cards in the remaining three hands that can take the card led. For instance: A. leads a two; there must and can only be nine cards, outside of his own hand, that will take it, as two from eleven leaves nine. This rule is the only important, epoch-making discovery made in whist during the last hundred years.

It is obvious, palpable, self-evident; and yet millions of people played whist for two hundred years and never discovered it. It was like Newton's apple. Everybody saw things falling about them, all over the world — apples, stocks, stars, reputations and meteors — but nobody stopped long enough to reason about it. I know thousands of bridge players who use the eleven rule in nearly every hand

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

they play and yet I have only met half a dozen people in all my life who understood why the unanny thing should always work out correctly.

In reality, it is very simple — simpler than Newton's apple by far. If the fourth best card were *always* led, the lead of a jack would show that there was no card outside the leader's hand that could take it, because the only three higher cards are the ace, king and queen, and, as the jack is the fourth best, it must be good against the board. Now, the jack is the eleventh card and therefore the key to the riddle. If the ten were led — from fourth best — there could only be one better card out; if the nine, two; if the eight, three, and so on to the end.

The rule was first discovered in the early eighties by Mr. R. F. Foster, at present a resident of Brooklyn. It was years, however, before he could get anybody to make use of it. He was ridiculed and made fun of by most of his friends and pupils. Finally in eighteen hundred and eighty-nine he published the rule and from that time on its spread has been rapid. To-day, it is used all over the

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

world by every bridge player of any pretensions. It is of course a far greater help in bridge than in straight whist, as the exposed dummy gives everybody a better chance to apply it in bridge than would be possible in straight whist.

In the early eighties, the term "fourth best" was not in general use. People in those days used to lead the "penultimate" or the "antepenultimate." When Foster came to study these antepenultimate leads from suits of six cards, and penultimates from suits of five, he wrote out, opposite each hand — from which a high card would not be led — the high cards that were out against the leader. For instance, a player would lead the penultimate from K, J, 9, 7, 2, and the high cards against him were the A, Q, 10, 8, all higher than his penultimate lead — the 7. When Foster got about a hundred of these combinations written out, he could not help observing that the number of cards out against the leader was always the same when the penultimate was the same card. If a 7 was led, there were always four cards higher against

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

the leader. If an 8, always three; if a 6, always five; and so on.

The difference between the card led being always the difference between the spots on that card and eleven, the rule followed easily.

The rule can, of course, be developed. For instance: If you lead third best, the card led must be deducted from twelve; second best, from thirteen; fifth best, from ten, etc., etc.

I suppose that very few people have any conception of the infinite number of possible bridge hands. I have often heard men say that they have seen every known combination of cards, but I am convinced that they would be appalled to know how many different combinations of cards are actually possible.

The following insignificant example is illuminative: There are no less than twenty-four ways in which the four aces may be placed at a bridge-table with reference to one another. This, of course, is a trifling matter, but let us now suppose that four people are playing bridge. Four hands are dealt, one each to North and South and East and West. After the hands have been played, what is the

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

chance that those very hands will be dealt again in exactly the same way; that is to say, that North will hold the same hand he held before, as will also South and East and West?

I have heard people guess that the odds would be a billion to one against such a fall of the cards, but never that it would be as high as a trillion to one, and yet a trillion to one is not a quadrillionth of the betting odds.

This problem may be expressed, algebraically, as follows:

$$(1 \times 2 \times 3 \text{ etc.} \times 13)^3$$

$$52 \times 51 \times 50 \text{ etc.} \times 14$$

If we work out the above sum we shall find that the odds against the same four hands being dealt to the same four players are 1,094,790,566,642,628,425,290,560,000 to one.

Here is a number that is beyond the comprehension of the average mind. Astronomers alone can grasp the full significance of it. To play all these hands would take an eternity. Let us suppose, for instance, that 400,000,000 players, making up 100,000,000 tables, were to play ten hours every day, and

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

ten hands every hour, it would take them over 3,000,000,000,000 centuries to complete them, without taking into account any but the first four figures of the result.

To take a rather fanciful example, let us suppose that our 400,000,000 players were to drink, each of them, a pint of water every day, it would, at this rate, take them two hundred years to drink Lake Champlain dry, so that, before finishing our imaginary bridge tournament, Lake Champlain would have been emptied 1,500,000,000,000 times.

In a similar way, it will be seen that the number of different 13-card hands may be expressed:

$$52 \times 51 \times \text{etc.} \times 40$$

$$1 \times 2 \times \text{etc.} \times 13$$

The result shows us that there are no fewer than 32,599,952,197 possible bridge hands.

(Parenthetically I may add that the betting odds against holding four aces in one hand are 180 to 1.)

I have sometimes been asked why the penalty was ever changed for leading out of the

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

wrong hand. The penalty for this offense used to be calling a suit from the correct hand, and, indeed, in some parts of America, this penalty is still exacted. It was enforced at the Whist Club in New York until, one fine day, the following incident occurred which suggested that a change in the rule would be advisable.

Dummy declared no trumps on the following hand: Ace, king, queen, jack, 10, 7, 3 of spades; king, jack, 4 of clubs; king of diamonds; jack, 10 of hearts; the score being 26 to 0, against him on the rubber game. The leader led the 7 of diamonds from ace, queen and five little ones, and the lone king in dummy held the trick. The dealer held six clubs to the ace, queen, 10, and one small spade. He saw at once that he was certain of winning a grand slam, but his excitement was so great that he led his single small spade from his own hand up to the seven high spades in dummy. Third hand noticed that the lead had come from the wrong hand and called a heart from dummy. With the aid of his partner, third hand cleaned up six heart tricks and then returned a diamond to the

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

leader, who, in turn, cleaned up six diamonds, a total of twelve tricks or a little slam, against a certain grand slam hand. This made a difference of 24 tricks at 12 points each and 60 points in the honor column, for slams — a penalty of 344 points for a hurried but wholly unintentional lead from the wrong hand. It was this incident that led to a revision of the old penalty at the Whist Club.

The other day some gentlemen at the "Whist" were comparing notes as to the largest rubber in their experience of bridge. One of them remarked that it was possible to score 2,316 points in one rubber, without a revoke or a double of any sort. This remark aroused the three of us to the point of incredulity. We began to study the matter and saw that the statement was absolutely correct and that such a rubber is — humanly speaking — possible.

The marvel is accomplished in the following utterly improbable way. North deals and declares hearts with five honors in one hand and wins the trick. East deals and declares hearts, but North still holds five honors in one hand. East wins the odd trick.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

North then holds five honors in hearts and wins the odd trick. East deals and wins the odd trick at hearts, North still holding five honors. North deals with the usual five honors and makes the trick. East declares hearts with no honors and North wins the trick. By this time North has scored 480 points in honors and 24 below the line. East has scored only 24 below the line. North now deals and declares spades with five honors in one hand, and makes the trick. East declares a defensive spade, and North holds five honors in one hand. East wins the trick. North again holds five honors in spades and wins the trick. East deals and declares spades. North as usual has his five honors, but loses the trick. The score is now 28 all below the line. At this point North declares no trumps, with 100 aces, and makes a grand slam, or a total for the first game of 784 points, net. The same score is repeated on the third game, but, on the second, East begins dealing and the same hands occur again, except that, on the eleventh deal, East declares no trumps, without an ace, and makes the odd. North, in this hand, has a hundred

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

aces, and, although he loses the game, he has scored 648 net points on it, or a total for the three games of 2,216 points. To this must be added 100 points for the rubber, or a grand total of 2,316 points, the largest rubber possible, without a penalty or a double.

The latest thing in bridge is a bridge correspondence school. This enterprising New York concern has prepared a course of six lessons which treat of such matters as correct habits, the score, the makes, the leads, the discards and the laws. With each lesson is sent a series of questions which must be answered by the pupil. Some of the finished papers, answers and communications must be highly diverting, if I may judge from the letters which are sent to me — as a result of my modest writings on the noble game. The questions that people send me are, some of them, incredibly weird and amusing, as, for example, the three that follow:

“To decide a bet — is the large slam the biggest of all the slams?”

“You evidently think, from your writings, that you are a fine double-dummy player! Some people in this town think pretty well of one of our local

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

players. Now, Mr. Bruce, we are ready here to make up a purse of one hundred dollars to back him against you for five hours' play (duplicate double-dummy), at any time or any place, etc., etc."

"Doctor Johnson once told Boswell that he was sorry he didn't play whist, as it helped 'to generate kindness.' Was the doctor in earnest or was he giving Boswell a 'josh'?"

Another bridge innovation is the announcement by a well-known magazine, devoted to women's interests, that they are ready to reply to inquiries concerning the etiquette of the game in their "department of behavior." An idle, trivial and rather slangy friend of mine was so delighted with this idea that he sat down and wrote, in different handwritings, the following queries to the etiquette editor:

(1) Is it ever good form for a gentleman to change his suit at the bridge table — in the presence of ladies?

ESTELLE.

(2) I write for advice. Have I been insulted? I called on my lady friend last night and she asked me to play bridge. I had never played before. Twice during the game she called me a dummy and once a cross rough. One hand she said she was afraid to play a heart because somebody held a

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

major tennis over her. What kind of an instrument or weapon is this? The last hand of the game I had the ace, king, queen, and jack of clubs. I led the jack and my partner — my lady friend's mother — trumped it. It was the first time around. After the hand my partner was hopping mad and whispered to her daughter, "How was I to know that he had a quart?" Now, as a matter of fact, I had only had a pint and *that* was at least an hour before calling. M. A. D."

I need hardly say that these brilliant (?) sallies of wit have remained, to this day, unnoticed by the overworked and, presumably, indignant etiquette editor.

There has lately been so much fevered and heated discussion about declaring a protective spade on one's own deal when one has no strength in any suit, that I am glad to be able to quote the first recorded hand in which this ruse was practiced in America. As there may be some little curiosity about it I shall quote the four hands of this particular deal in full. The hand was played at the Whist Club, in New York, in March, 1900. Mr. John Gleason, a remarkably fine bridge player, held Z.'s hand, and declared spades at the

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

score of love all on the second game, he and his partner having won the first. The cards were dealt in the following order:

Z (dealer). 8, 7, 4, of hearts; 6, 5, 3, of clubs; 5, 3, 2, of diamonds; jack, 10, 9, 4, of spades.

A (leader). 9, 3, of hearts; queen, 9, 8, 2, of clubs; jack, 7, 6, 4, of diamonds; queen, 8, 3, of spades.

Y (dummy). Ace, 6, 5, of hearts; ace, 7, 4, of clubs; king, 10, 9, 8, of diamonds; ace, 7, 2, of spades.

B (third hand). King, queen, jack, 10, 2, of hearts; king, jack, 10, of clubs; ace, queen, of diamonds; king, 6, 5, of spades.

This original make of spades so frightened and mystified the gentleman who was playing third hand that he failed to double, although, with his cards, a double seems a fairly sure risk. He afterward explained that he thought Z. must have had a battalion of spades, or he would not have declared them with the score at love all. As the hand was actually played Y.-Z. lost three by cards, but scored four by honors. Had Mr. Gleason passed the make, the dummy would have been

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

obliged to declare no trumps and third hand would certainly have doubled so as to be sure of a heart lead.

At no trumps, doubled, Y.-Z. would lose four by cards, or ninety-six points — although they would score thirty for aces — a net saving of sixty-four points in favor of the spade declaration, not to mention the game and perhaps, a little later, the rubber.

Since this declaration of Mr. Gleason's, way back in 1900, the "protective spade" has come more and more generally into use. Indeed, I think that two-thirds of the best bridge players now declare an original spade if they find, after dealing, that they have not a probable trick in their hand.

These hands, without any high cards, are always known as "Yarboroughs." This is the correct name for them wherever the English tongue is spoken, and I deeply deplore the growing popularity of that hateful word "bust," the origin of which, I am afraid, must be credited to the West.

On all sides I am beginning to hear that dreadful question, "Do you pass a bust?" instead of "Do you pass a Yarborough?"

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Say! Chicago! Are you guilty? Speak! Confess! Is the hideous crime upon your shoulders?

I have noted, of late, all over the country a steady growth of bridge playing, and, what is more, I think I detect a little less prejudice against it on all sides and a little more tolerance in people's minds for all such persons as are a prey to its insidious delights. As far back as March 15th, 1907, I remember reading that, in Salt Lake City, Senator Williams had introduced a bill in the State Senate making the playing of bridge whist for money, *or for a prize*, a felony punishable by imprisonment from two to five years. After much discussion the bill was passed, but I doubt if it ever became law, as I have heard of no women of fashion being dragged from their splendid residences in a "black Maria" to the gates of the Utah donjon keeps. I am afraid that Senator Williams must be, like all Western senators, a relentless foe of anything that tends to dim the glory or check the sway of our great national game of poker.

Should Governor Hughes read these few lines I trust that he will forbear attempting

MORE OR LESS SERIOUS

to incarcerate all the ladies who have done so much to make bridge popular in Albany. Should he, however, pass such a law in the state of New York, I predict that our prisons will become the most delightful dwelling places in the State, and that over fifty per cent of their inmates will be lovely ladies of fashion, who cannot be kept from their rubber by any such ridiculous means as the enactment of laws, the thickest of prison walls, or the thundering fiats of their paternal governor.

CHAPTER VIII

THE LADIES — ANGELIC AND OTHERWISE

MANY stories are told, some of them doubtless apocryphal, of games of bridge played by ladies under peculiar circumstances.

In a private New York hospital there were, last summer, four ladies who loved the game devotedly. Unfortunately they were all so ill that they were not permitted to leave their beds. But bridge, like love, will find the way, and so these ladies every morning commanded their nurses to wheel their several beds from their sick rooms, out into the central hall, where the beds were arranged, two on one side of the hall and two on the other. Partners were chosen, and four packs of cards and four lap-boards were produced. A nurse dealt the cards, one to each player on her particular board. After the make the dummy was spread out in duplicate on each

THE LADIES

board, and the ladies, as it was their turn to play, feebly called their cards. In this rather awkward way the mornings were made to pass very happily.

In Scotland an English nobleman and his wife had a grouse moor. They had asked a large shooting party up from London. The shooting was usually about six miles from the house, and, every noon, four or five of the ladies would bundle themselves into a bus and drive to the coverts, in order to lunch with the sportsmen. A folding-table was carried along, as well as some cards and score-pads, and bridge agreeably whiled the time away in the omnibus until the beaters and sportsmen came into view.

At the State Insane Asylum at Poughkeepsie bridge is often played, and some of the female patients are, I am told, extremely proficient at the game. I am assured, however, that most of these ladies have an exaggerated idea of their skill, an unhappy delusion shared by millions of their more fortunate sisters without the walls of insane pavilions.

But the most extraordinary feminine in-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

stance of bridge under high pressure was the case of Mrs. James Thompson, of Fourth avenue, Detroit. This little incident found its way into the Detroit papers and was widely copied in all the press of America, and I am glad to quote it, as it shows that women sometimes possess, under trying circumstances, a truly admirable philosophical spirit as well as a lively interest in bridge.

Mrs. Thompson had gone, one winter evening, to dine with some neighbors and play a friendly rubber or two. The match was a close one, and she was struggling valiantly to pull out the game with a very indifferent no-trumper, when some friends rushed in, and, in a state of almost frenetical excitement, announced to Mrs. Thompson that her house was on fire and would soon be beyond all hope of saving. The guests flew to the windows and saw that the house was already a pillar of flame. Mrs. Thompson seemed a trifle saddened by the catastrophe which was befalling her, but quite as much vexed by the untimely interruption to the game. She soon sat down again at the table and remarked,

THE LADIES

as though nettled by the intrusion of the newcomers: "Come on; let's finish."

At this point a reporter from a local paper was admitted, and asked Mrs. Thompson what she had to say about the conflagration.

"I don't know anything about it," she said a little testily. "The house is on fire, as you can plainly see, but we are luckily on the outside and that is all there is to it."

With this she triumphantly played the queen of diamonds, and was soon completely under the spell of the game again.

Although this is an extreme instance of women's devotion to bridge, I must admit that I have, of late, been surprised to see what a firm hold the game has taken on them, both on this side of the water and in England.

Sometimes we almost regret that women play bridge so much. It develops in them — even more than it does in men — trying little eccentricities and peculiarities of character. My readers will probably know what I mean. Let us consider a very few examples. To begin with there is —

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

(1) The lady who plays with such a professional air that we feel quite helpless and hopeless from the very start of the game. (The rapidity and precision with which she gathers and stacks her tricks is truly appalling.)

(2) The belle who only plays for amusement, "So you needn't expect me to take the game seriously — for I *shan't*."

(3) The great card holder. (The Christian Fathers used to say that if one *thought* murder, one had, in sober truth, committed it. Merciful Heavens! How many of these women have I played against — and killed?)

(4) The post-mortem lady.

(5) The creature who says: "But how was I to know that you held," etc.

(6) The fidget.

(7) The matron who remarks: "Well, Elwell says —"

(8) The chatterbox.

(9) The young lady who, after leaving it and getting the inevitable spade, pounces on all the cards, paws and pores over them — in order to see what would have happened at

THE LADIES

hearts, or no trumps, or whatever other make she may originally have had in her mind.

(10) The prosperous woman whose fingers literally swarm with rings and whose nails are so red and so polished and so shiny that they always make me think of the line in "Macbeth" :

"This my hand will rather the manicurious nails incarnadine, etc."

The poor ladies! How they catch it from the critics and the comic papers! Very feebly and humbly, I should like to say that they *sometimes* (very rarely, of course) deserve it. I am sure that anybody who has watched a ladies' bridge tournament, for valuable prizes, will agree with me that there is more than a grain of truth in all these comic-supplement jibes.

A lady was once kind enough to explain the whole tournament miracle to me very clearly. It seems that it is all due to woman's original sin — and love of prizes. It is the result, as it were, of a deep-rooted feminine depravity.

The lady went on: "Now, take my case,

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

for example. I played in a tournament only yesterday. I won at three tables and graduated to the last table — that reserved for the finalists. We sat down, cut for the deal, and began our struggle. The other players went into the tea-room or drove to their respective houses, leaving us four alone in the card-room. We all played fast, and fairly, and well. It was two rubbers all, and game all. So far no blood had been shed; there had not been a squabble, an insinuation, or an unkind word: not a kick or a scratch or a bite. A more quiet, ladylike contest you never beheld, and I am certain that all would have gone along smoothly to the end if the hostess had not, at that moment, perpetrated a truly despicable crime.

“She came into the room and put the prizes upon the table where we were playing, under our very eyes, *and left them there*. The prizes were lovely gold purses. Now, you know that I have plenty of money and any quantity of gold purses. I did not, as a matter of fact, need a purse at all, but those wretched golden things just sat there and glared at us. They hypnotized us all. It

THE LADIES

is useless to deny it. Women are intoxicated by such things.

“I assure you that our entire moral natures underwent a sea change. We did things and said things and looked things that were positively criminal. A curious, psychological change seemed to be sweeping over us. I could have cheated or peeked or kicked my partner on the shins, and when, finally, she revoked and swore that she hadn't, I naturally took her side — being her partner — and that led to a terrible row. I really had some hopes that we would come to blows but we finally quieted down and went on with the rubber.

“Well, we lost, of course, and that nasty Bartlett woman and her odious sister got the purses, after all! I feel as if I never wanted to speak to them again. As I told you, I have two or three gold purses already, but I hated to see those Bartlett creatures winning such lovely prizes simply by cheating, for I am *almost* sure that that is the only way they managed to beat us.”

Speaking of tournaments reminds me that last year at a ladies' bridge club in Newport,

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

a tournament was given with rather a tragic ending. This club was used almost entirely by the older ladies of the colony. This fact gave point to the somewhat cruel and uncharitable remark of a Newport bachelor who never spoke of the club except as "The Hags' Hell." In this particular tournament individual scores were kept, and a first and second prize had been generously provided by Mrs. B., one of the lady members.

As bad luck would have it two of the ladies tied for second prize. This led to a great deal of excited discussion among them as to what should be done. Finally the tournament committee suggested that the two ladies should cut for the second prize. One of the contestants, who was about sixty years of age and had a decided will of her own, was very much averse to doing this. She remarked, in a loud voice, that she had won a prize and was not going to be "done out of it."

At this point the lady donor took a hand in the fracas and said that she could arrange the matter in no other way. With rather a bad grace the elderly siren assented; cut the pack — and lost. Her nerves, disappoint-

THE LADIES

ment and annoyance were rapidly getting the best of her. She looked the mortified donor straight in the eye and remarked, in a very acrid tone :

“ Well, all I can say is that *somebody* is getting fearfully stingy ! I win a prize and get nothing at all. I never heard of such an imposition in all my life ! ”

With this sally she marched solemnly out of the club and stepped haughtily into her waiting victoria.

I recently heard a most remarkable story about a lady's run of good luck at bridge.

At first, it surprised me greatly, but, when I heard the facts of the case I was a little less astonished. A lady in Baltimore assured me that she had won the odd trick, or more, in over fourteen hundred consecutive hands. I was incredulous, but she hastened to explain that she did not play the hands in the usual way — with a partner.

It seems that her husband is devoted to his club, where, like nearly all husbands, he merely goes “ to read in the library and write letters.” This leaves the poor lady a great deal alone in the evenings, and, being a close

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

student of bridge, she gets out her table and deals the pack into four piles. She then arranges the cards a little, so that the imaginary adversaries won't, by any chance, get the best of her, and proceeds to play out the hand. If she finds that her opponents are a shade too strong for her, she again changes the position of the cards, snatching an ace or two from her adversaries, tucking them in her own hand, and replacing the aces by useless twos and threes. In this way (but purely as a result of her skill, of course,) she has vanquished her opponents — in about five months — over fourteen hundred times. They have never yet been known to win the odd trick. She has even gone so far as to *name* her fancied opponents. She always thinks of them as two women in Baltimore whom she cordially detests and against whom she treasures a bitter animosity.

This lady also tells the following true story about herself. She had not played the game very long before she was asked out to a bridge dinner, on St. Paul Street. A great card expert was at the dinner, and, after the feast, the usual telltale signs of the game were ob-

THE LADIES

served. Card-tables were brought — score-blocks and cigarettes.

She and her hostess were playing against the expert and the hostess' sister. The score was love all. The expert dealt and made it no trumps — with the ace of hearts, bare; the ace and two small diamonds; the ace and jack of spades; and seven clubs to the king, queen, jack. My friend looked at her hand and doubled, holding eight hearts to the king, queen, jack; the king and four of diamonds; the bare ace of clubs; and the king and queen of spades. Now, she had only to open her long heart suit in order to make eight certain tricks and the game, as she had a practically sure entry in every suit. She became a trifle confused, however, and seemed to be in some uneasiness about her lead.

“ Oh, dear,” she said, “ I really don't know how or what to lead! ”

The expert felt convinced that she would not have doubled unless she had held the ace of clubs. Now, this was the only card that worried him. If he could get rid of that, the rest would be easy.

“ Well, Mrs. N.,” said he, “ there is a

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

very good rule to remember. When you are in doubt, always lead an ace and have a look around."

This seemed like excellent advice, so she confidently played out her ace of clubs. After this mortal error, it did not matter how she played. The expert could always be sure of three by cards and the game. He had been just sharp enough to try his little ruse, and he must have been keenly delighted with its entire success.

Here is a little bridge anecdote that has a certain note of sadness in it, although we really find it hard to believe that ladies ever grow so rancid and spiteful.

Mr. and Mrs. R. have been married for ten years. Mrs. R. has reached that delightful point in wedded bliss where she can quarrel with her husband all day long and still enjoy it. Mr. R. is a very keen bridger and never misses an evening in his club card-room, where he usually stays until close to eleven o'clock, when he pays up — or takes in — and jumps into a cab, prepared to face the inevitable verbal encounter at his home. Mrs. R. permits him to play in the evening, solely on the un-

THE LADIES

derstanding that he shall always arrive home before eleven o'clock, that being her invariable hour for retiring.

On this particular occasion, however, he has been caught in a long rubber and it is nearly half-past the hour before he noiselessly slips his key into the door, turns it, and creeps, in his creaking boots, stealthily up the stairs to his dressing room. Arrived in this harbor of refuge, he feels a certain sense of safety — but not for long!

Before he has had time to remove his guilty boots, he hears the familiar voice outside his dressing room, followed, almost directly, by the familiar face at the door.

“A *nice* time to come home! Why did you bother to come home *at all*? Why not play your silly game all night?”

“My dear Henrietta, I’m really very sorry, but I got into an infernally long rubber, and it is a rule among gentlemen that, having started a rubber, one ought to finish it.”

“Well, I don’t believe there is any such rule at all.”

“Well, my dear, perhaps you know more about the rules than I do.”

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

"Well! There's one bridge rule that I *do* know all about, and I'm going to see that you keep it, too."

"What is that, Henrietta?"

"The rule of eleven, and the very next time that you play bridge after eleven o'clock, you'll find out what the penalty is! Do you understand?"

I have lately been much impressed by the large number of ladies who are giving bridge lessons in the East.

In a recent issue of *Whist* I saw the advertisement of four women bridge teachers, in Boston alone. I should say that there must be ten in New York, and at least five in Philadelphia, so that bridge may be said to have opened a new career for women, a career that, though exacting, must be fairly lucrative, as the usual charge of a good man teacher in New York is ten dollars an hour for four people; that is to say, two dollars and fifty cents for each person. I am told that one man teacher gets as high as twenty dollars an hour. This seems like a high price, but I fancy that, notwithstanding his golden double-eagle, his hour is not often a happy one.

THE LADIES

One of these teachers told me an amusing incident in connection with his lessons in Boston. It seems that three very prim and conventional old maids, who lived together on Newbury Street, decided to learn bridge. Mr. Elstreet was accordingly called in. A price of ten dollars was agreed upon for each evening lesson. The first meeting of the class was marked by a decided note of stiffness and formality. The presence in the house of a young man in a dress suit, a young man who was good naturedly badgering and scolding them, was evidently a great strain on these autocratic and punctilious old ladies.

After the lesson Mr. Elstreet, with great affability, bade them all good night and started for the hall. He noticed that one of the ladies, the eldest, gauntest and primmest of the three, was following him, in an awkward and embarrassed way, out of the drawing-room.

Something serious was evidently on her mind. Finally, with a little movement of shyness, she closed up the gap between them and whispered hurriedly in his ear: "Oh, Mr. Elstreet, as you go out you'll find ten dollars

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

in the lining of your hat." Having delivered this delicate and tactful message in the hall, she retreated again in quick alarm to the drawing-room.

I remember once hearing a lady say that she was surprised to see how little her bridge-teacher knew about the game. Her instructor was a lady in reduced circumstances and her game — I can speak from experience — certainly left a good deal to be desired.

"What can you expect?" the tired martyr once said to me. "I was so poor that I had to do *something*, and, as I like playing cards better than anything else, I thought I would teach bridge. I am doing *splendidly*, and as soon as I can lay aside a little money I mean to take lessons and learn something about the game myself."

Perhaps the most shocking bridge incident of the past year was revealed in the fashionable G—— divorce proceedings in New York, when it was darkly intimated by counsel that a love of bridge was one of the wife's dominating passions. It even appeared that at one card-party she had so far forgotten herself as to bite the hostess on the arm.

THE LADIES

“Puck” asked the opinion of a friend of mine — Mr. C.— as to the etiquette in such matters. He advised them to print the following note, editorially:

We must candidly confess that we rarely play an entire rubber of bridge without longing to bite, kick, shoot, strangle, or otherwise assault our partner, but in this case it appears that the *bitee* was not a partner but an *adversary*, which changes the entire moral complexion of the case.

Now what should the penalty be for such a mordant, madcap whim? Before we can attempt to decide so nice a question of card etiquette we should have light on the following points: (1) Was she biting through a “tailor-made” or a “peek-a-boo”? (2) How often did she bite her? (3) Was the wound a mortal one? (4) Did the hostess bite her back?

These questions are all vital. Failing any exact information on them we recommend the infliction of one of the severest penalties known in bridge; namely, the call of a suit from the biter's hand. The case is naturally aggravated by the fact that it was the *hostess* who was attacked. Had it been a mere guest no penalty could have been exacted except the demand for a new deal.

N. B.—The original biter can in *no case* score game or slam.

CHAPTER IX

THE HATEFUL PROCESS OF DISGORGING

THE best method of discarding (or disgorging) at bridge, both at no trumps and with a declared trump, has been a matter of controversy and jest ever since the game was invented. I regret to say that this discussion is still raging all over the civilized world.

There are to-day seven recognized systems of discarding, as follows: (1) From weakness; (2) from strength; (3) the French; (4) the seven; (5) the circular; (6) the Canadian; (7) the mixed — from weakness and strength combined. Now, this *embarras de choix* leads to an immense amount of confusion and anguish. Every time we sit down to a rubber with a strange partner we are forced to go through with that tiresome but inevitable prologue: "Partner, have you any marked eccentricities in discarding? Are you a sane man or are you, perhaps, a votary of

DISGORGING

bizarrerie? If so, will you please be good enough to draw me a careful blueprint and diagram of your system, not forgetting, of course, the Maltese cross to show the spot where you suddenly fly off from your system and alight on another?"

Imagine inviting a company to dinner and, before so much as attacking the caviare, interrogating all our hungry guests as follows: "Are you a vegetarian — if so, green or white?" "Do you Fletcherize your purée?" "Will you kindly permit me to eat starch foods if I permit you to eat grape-nuts?" "Do you prefer sugar or maple syrup on your oysters?"

What a bore it is, to be sure, this eternal questioning and explaining. Fortunately the discussion sometimes leads us into the pleasant paths of humor, as, for instance, in this little joke, presumably of a wholly English, if not altogether refined, origin.

Passenger, on a Channel turbine: "I say, dear boy! What ought a chap to eat before making this devilish crossing? It's my first trip to the Continent, you know. A Johnny at the club tipped me to feed up jolly well —

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

bloater, mutton chop, ale, apple tart, coffee, a pipe, and all that sort of thing. My mater, on the other hand, says only hot water and a wafer of plasmon. How say you — what? ”

Fellow Passenger: “ My dear old boy, it’s simply a matter of whether you prefer discarding from weakness or strength.”

Let me turn from gay to grave and implore my readers to listen to reason and adopt the usually accepted method of discarding — from weakness. It has stood the test for a dozen years and is by far the most frequent discard that we meet with. I may even venture the assertion — knowing well that a furious storm of missiles and imprecations will rain about my defenseless head — that four out of five of the really good players in the world use the weak discard. At the risk of seeming to instruct — always a tiresome task for the listeners, but sometimes not a wholly uncongenial occupation to the instructor — I shall quote what I consider ten of the sanest, simplest and most rational hints on discarding that I have ever heard. They were taught me, long ago, by Mr. Charles S. Street, an acknowledged authority on the game.

DISGORGING

(1) When you have a chance for only one discard, try to make that as instructive and informative as possible, taking fully into account dummy's displayed hand.

(2) The discard of a low card — 2, 3, 4 or 5 — is from a suit that you do not wish your partner to lead.

(3) If, at no trumps, dummy has a strong or long suit, which your partner would be unlikely to change to, don't discard from that suit, but from another. This will mark the third suit in your hand. Your play is not to show weakness, but to guide him infallibly to his next choice.

(4) A reverse discard, first a high card and then a lower one in the same suit, shows that you have strength in that suit. In playing a reverse discard make your first card as high as possible — without fear of loss. In fact, the single discard of a card as high as the eight or nine — where one discard only is possible — is usually understood as the beginning of a reverse and indicative of strength.

(5) To discard first from one suit and then from another marks the third suit as strong in your hand.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

(6) To discard twice from the same suit — in an upward scale — asks your partner to change to that one of the other two which best suits his hand, or in which he can render you the best assistance.

(7) The discard of an ace shows other cards equally high in that suit, while a king shows other cards equally high, without the ace.

(8) Do not discard all, or the only one, of a suit. Save one, if possible, to follow suit with on the first round.

(9) Try to save one of your partner's suit to return to him.

(10) If possible, save one guard for an ace or a king; two guards for a queen; and three for a jack or a ten. A jack and two small is a dangerous suit to discard from.

I think that these rules of Mr. Street's have only to be read to be approved and, I trust, adopted.

A masculine player should always try to follow a fixed method of discarding. With every deference to the ladies — always a standing toast with me, and usually a bumper — I know, alas, too well, that it is useless to

DISGORGING

expect them to adhere to any *one* system of discarding. In the animal kingdom — particularly in such orders of life as are above the sponge or the invertebrate worms — the charm of the female is chiefly due to her beautiful variableness, and, to put it mildly, the flexibility of her moral fibre. Let no bridge player expect from her a fixed allegiance to any single system.

A long acquaintance with them has taught me that they are, in bridge, as in the other concerns of mortal life, a beautiful, if enigmatical mixture of weakness and strength. To prove that the wit and humor spent upon the subject of disgorging at bridge are not all on the other side of the Atlantic I must quote a cheerful sally recently perpetrated by Mr. Street. I must begin by explaining that a heated and furious discussion has been raging in the whist papers for the past few months between the advocates of the strength discard and the champions of weakness.

Mr. R. F. Foster, representing the strong, and Mr. Street, representing the weak, have been battling royally in the pages of *Whist*. Mr. Foster, in hurling his farewell bomb, said

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

that there were daily deserters from the ranks of the weak discarders, and he drew attention to the fact that these deserters never returned to their fold. Mr. Street, in his reply, remarked that the strength discard was a broken toy, which every child, grown to manhood, might safely throw aside. He closed his broadside with the following sally, which I quote verbatim:

“ Mr. Foster adds that every day there are deserters from the ranks of the weak discarders. He says that they never go back. This last statement is, no doubt, true. The State has made returns from certain of its public institutions most difficult.”

Apropos of this subject, I picked up a newspaper a short time ago and saw the following classic, which I quote, with apologies, as nearly as I can remember it.

Tramp, to the lady of the house: “ Can you give me something to eat, lady? I’m starving! ”

Lady: “ No.”

Tramp: “ Well! Can you give me some old clothes? Winter is coming and I am up against it.”

DISGORING

Lady: "I have nothing but a pair of my husband's trousers which he told me to throw away. If they would be of any use —"

Tramp: "Thank you, lady! A good thick pair of pants is just what I want."

Lady: "Well, I wouldn't be too hopeful about them. I hate to discourage you but *my* husband always discards from weakness."

Here is a new system of discarding invented by Mr. W. G. Hammer Jr., of Virginia. It has been cordially recommended to advanced players, but I am afraid that it is a little too complicated for beginners.

Let an odd card call for a black suit — spade or club. Let an even card call for red suits — hearts or diamonds. Now use the alphabet rule, C. D. H. S.— that is, let a club call for a diamond, a diamond call for a heart, a heart call for a spade, a spade call for a club. Instead of the whole rule, one only needs use a part of it. Couple the first two suits together, club-diamond, then the last two, heart-spade. Club-diamond call for heart-spade — heart-spade call for club-diamond.

Now, since an odd card calls for black suit, suppose we discard one, say, 3 of diamonds;

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

diamond discard calls for a heart-spade, but spade, being a black suit, you must want it, since you discard an odd card. Should you not have an odd diamond, you could discard an odd club; club discard calls for a spade as well as a diamond. Should you want a club, you must discard an odd card, either a heart or spade. For a heart you must discard an even club or diamond. For a diamond you must discard an even heart or spade.

The advantage of this discard is that you have two suits to throw from to show strength. To recapitulate:

Club-diamond calls for hearts-spades.

Heart-spade calls for clubs-diamonds.

Odd cards call for black suits.

Even cards call for red suits.

Two, 4, 6, 8, 10 diamonds and 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 clubs all call for hearts.

Two, 4, 6, 8, 10 hearts and 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 spades all call for diamonds.

Three, 5, 7, 9 hearts and 3, 5, 7, 9 spades all call for clubs.

Three, 5, 7, 9 diamonds and 3, 5, 7, 9 clubs all call for spades.

CHAPTER X

ROYAL AND ARISTOCRATIC BRIDGERS

I KNOW of nothing more unholy than the rage which suffuses my soul when I play bridge with certain partners.

The worst offender of them all is Mrs. W. R., in London, who, though a very beautiful woman, has every fault known to the cardplaying world. She hums, strums on the table, refuses to admit her mistakes, fancies her game, never sorts her cards, tells you what *might* have happened, hesitates, looks at the ceiling, and, worse and worse, *will* not lead trumps.

Apropos of this lady, and her annoying habit of never getting out the trumps, there is a curious story.

It seems that the Amir of Afghanistan is an excellent bridge player. He recently surprised the club-men of London by his sound and thoughtful game. During his stay in

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

England he went to visit Mrs. W. R.'s brother, Lord Ch——, in Surrey. With him he took his swarthy *aide-de-camp*, an Oxford graduate, who turned out to be an even more brilliant player than his royal master. The *aide-de-camp* suffered the inevitable agonies, which Mrs. R.'s partners always fell heir to. Twice she "chucked" a rubber for him by not getting out the trumps. After the torture was over Mrs. R. pointed to the Amir, who was playing at another table, and asked the A. D. C. if he ever played bridge in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, of which, notwithstanding his English education, the A. D. C. was a native.

"My royal master," he said, "recently taught the game to a few of his courtiers, and *one* of his wives; but our evening rubber is now, alas, always a 'stag' affair, for, since the unfortunate accident to his wilful but beautiful wife, we can hardly hope for any more partners from the royal harem."

"Accident," said Mrs. R. "What accident was that?"

"Ah," said the A. D. C. "It is a sad story. I must first inform you that of all

ROYAL BRIDGERS

the Amir's wives, Nama Mafufta was the best beloved. Before her rise to favor she had been a slave girl, a Circassian odalisque. In all 'Kabool'—as we pronounce it—there was no maiden so fair, so enrapturing; so worthy of an Amir's love as Nama, the Gleaming Eye of Heaven. She amused herself, while playing bridge, by hesitating, gazing into space, humming little airs, thumping the toy tom-toms—or, as we call them, *pharagimbos*—and her manners were so natural, well, Mrs. R., they resembled yours!

"She had been taught to play bridge by the Amir, and soon became a fair player, but she had an unconquerable aversion to leading trumps. Time and again the Amir would rage and storm, and time and again the Gleaming Eye of Heaven would allow her good suit-cards to be ruthlessly ruffed. On these occasions, the anger of my imperial master knew no bounds."

"'Hearken to me,' he would shout out in fury. 'I am a cruel and a headstrong ruler and my will must be obeyed. Nama, my beautiful songbird, mark you well my words. If, when it is next your turn to deal, you fail,

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

on your very first opportunity, to lead out trumps in a declared trump hand, you will meet with a fate so terrible that the horror of it will forever echo throughout Kabul.'

"Shortly after this the Circassian Eye of Heaven proceeded to deal. She picked up her cards, gazed at them for a long time, moved them about in her hand, hummed, started to speak, hesitated, looked at the golden lamp above her and then gazed again at her cards just as an English lady — you, for example — might have done. She finally declared a diamond.

"Thinking, perhaps, that her royal master had been in a playful mood when he had chided her about her little failing, she risked one finesse in the spade suit before attacking the trumps.

"Alas! Poor Nama's queen of spades was trumped by third hand who, with his partner's aid, established a cross ruff in hearts and spades, as a result of which the game was lost to my all-powerful master and his heavenly Nama Mafufta.

"The Amir's face was a terrible sight to behold — pale, ashen, grim as death.

ROYAL BRIDGERS

“ ‘ Enough ! ’ he cried in a rage, and, turning to his serving men, he fairly bellowed : ‘ Bring to the palace gates the royal oxen and the golden chains. ’ ”

Here the A. D. C. paused.

“ Madame,” he said, “ I hardly dare to go on. I cannot bring myself to describe the horrors that ensued. They are too ghastly and shuddery but I can assure you that as the bewitching lady was led off to meet her terrible fate her last words were :

“ ‘ You see, I thought that if my queen finesse went through I could establish my spades and *then* lead trumps. ’ ”

“ While the heavenly body of the heavenly Nama was being sundered, limb from limb, by the royal oxen in the courtyard of the palace, the Amir calmly continued to shuffle the cards for the next deal, muttering savagely all the while : ‘ So perish the guilty in Kabul ! ’ ”

“ Well,” said Mrs. W. R., after a long pause, “ I think the story is an altogether idiotic one and I don’t see why you bother to tell it to *me*, of all people ? ”

How often, dear reader, have you longed

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

to call loudly for the oxen and the chains?

There is yet another story about a bridge-game, a lady, and a royal personage; and, as there is a very witty shaft in it, I may be excused for narrating it.

This time the royal butt of it is King Edward of England, who, since 1898, has been an enthusiastic and inveterate bridge-player.

It seems that the King had gone to the country to visit the Duke of Devonshire for the week-end. One of the guests was Lord G., (a rather vulgar bounder) whom the king had, a short while before, raised to the peerage — presumably for value received. Another "creation" of the same sort was also of the house-party. In the evening, a rubber was made up of the King, the late duchess, Mrs. K., and Lord G. One of the onlookers was Mr. N., a well-known wit and diner-out, who had that morning been outrageously snubbed by the vulgar Lord G. Mr. N. could find no words in which to characterize "these bounders" who had been, he thought, so shamelessly ennobled. On the last hand of the rubber Mrs. K. dealt and left it to the King, who, after some hesita-

ROYAL BRIDGERS

tion, declared no trumps, a make which was promptly doubled by Lord G., the leader. When the King's dummy went down there was a gasp from Mrs. K., his partner. The hand consisted of the ace, king, knave of clubs, four hearts to the knave, four diamonds to the knave, and the knave and ten of spades.

The King looked at Mrs. K. in amused surprise at her apparent disapproval of the make.

"Sir," she answered, "I know perfectly well that the king can do no wrong, but there is a limit even to the divine right of monarchs; and besides, sir, my heart is, as you know, affected."

Lord G. had soon cleaned up four by cards on the hand and started to add up the rubber. A few moments later he turned to Mr. N., with whom he had made a side bet on the match, and asked him in a whisper what he thought of the King's declaration.

"Hardly sound," murmured N., "but easily explained. You see, His Majesty is so used to raising knaves to power that he sometimes fancies they can be made the equals of kings and queens."

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Bridge stories about King Edward seem to have no end. Here is another one.

Mrs. T., a very charming American widow, went to England last year for her first visit. She was asked to a country house, where the King was also a guest. His Majesty, who is a great admirer of feminine pulchritude, asked to play at the same table as the young American widow. They cut against each other, and the matter of stakes was soon under review.

"What, sir, would you like to lose, as I warn you that I am an extremely lucky player?"

The king's reply was to the point. "Not a penny, if I can help it — and how much do you want to *win*?"

"A sovereign, sir," looking straight at the king.

"I can assure you, Mrs. T.," said the king, "that you won a sovereign the moment that I first beheld you."

They say that the greatest card gambling countries of the world are Poland, Russia, Austria, Greece and Hungary, and that, of

ROYAL BRIDGERS

all these, the Austrians are the most inveterate and incurable.

I well remember Count A., an Austrian of the most exalted family who came to this country a few years ago and who treated me to one of the prettiest exhibitions of nerve, or blunted morality — one may call it by either name — that I have ever beheld. He and I had gone to a Long Island house party for Friday to Monday. We found the house full of people, some of whom proverbially played bridge for high stakes. Count A. was a man of irreproachable breeding but deplorable means. He had run through three separate fortunes and had nothing to show for it except the reputation of being an excellent baccarat and bridge player. He had drifted to New York, presumably on the usual errand — to espouse an heiress. He was a singularly attractive creature and I had conceived a great liking for him, on the few occasions that I had met him before our house party. On Friday evening, bridge was suggested and three tables were formed, one for very high stakes and two for moderate points. At one o'clock

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Count A. had lost three hundred dollars at the high table. He came up to my room for a cigarette and complained good-naturedly of his persistent bad luck, which, he admitted had left him with a bare two hundred dollars on his letter of credit. With this sum he thought that he could manage to get back to Vienna for which place he had planned to leave in two days time, for the reason, I guessed, that he had found the heiresses a trifle gun-shy. I suggested a small loan, but he indignantly refused to listen to such an idea.

On Saturday afternoon he again "sat in" the same game and lost two hundred dollars, with the easy, careless, and debonair grace peculiar to his kind. His predicament, I really believe, worried him less than it did me. Late on Saturday evening somebody suggested a game of toy roulette, and Count A. was altogether delighted with the suggestion but he begged to be allowed to begin the bank. This plan seemed to meet with general favor and the green cloth and the little wheel were brought in by the servants. The game soon started with counters of one, two, five,

ROYAL BRIDGERS

and ten dollars. The ladies had gone to bed and there were eight gentlemen punting against the bank. Count A. spun the marble and lost about fifty dollars on his first roll. On his second he must have lost twice that amount. Notwithstanding the fact that he literally did not know how to get back to Vienna, his manner was as unconcerned and care-free as if he were playing for pennies. I entirely lost sight of his — shall I say? — moral turpitude, and found myself only marveling at his coolness and audacity.

To cut a long tale short, at the end of an hour's play he had won back all his losses at bridge and about a hundred and fifty dollars besides.

Absurd as he had been to allow himself to be put in such a hole I could not but admire the *sang-froid* with which he had pulled himself out of it. I hear you saying: "What if he had lost? How would he have paid the gentlemen who won against him?" "Well," I answer, "he would have borrowed it from his consul, or scraped the 'needful' together in some mysterious way known only to gamblers — and to Austrians."

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Count A. was, to be sure, one of the very best bridge players that I have ever met and the chances of his winning at the game were greatly in his favor. He combined every species of intrepidity and cunning, and, when he found, in a given hand, that a particular line of attack or defense was no longer practicable he changed to new tactics, like a salmon on a line, with a cleverness and quickness that were truly wonderful. His adroitness in misleading an adversary and in uniting his forces with his partner's, was little short of marvelous. The caprices of his partner seemed, indeed, to be known to him beforehand, and his power of adapting himself to a bad partner and inspiring confidence in him would be a revelation to many of our so-called experts.

CHAPTER XI

TRAGEDIES, SURPRISES AND HORRORS

It is surprising, in playing bridge, to note how many hands are helped and how many are ruined by the opening lead.

If a player were blessed with some demoniacal power of divination so that his opening lead were always suited to the peculiarities of the twenty-six cards held jointly by the dealer and dummy, he would be invincible at bridge and his profits would be enormous.

Take, for instance, the singleton lead. I believe that many hands are saved by a short opening but I also believe that more hands are ruined by it. In many, many cases a short opening will wreck a hand beyond any power of saving. In many cases an opening from a long suit will do the same. There is no knowing, before the lead, what terrible pitfalls destiny has prepared for you. I have seen countless rubbers lost because of a *cor-*

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

rect opening. Indeed, I believe that the proper or regular opening of a hand proves disastrous in one hand out of every three.

Here is an example! The other evening I was playing a rubber with three gentlemen on a Southern express train. The hands were as follows: The dealer held queen, jack, 10 9, 7 of hearts; jack, 10, 8 of diamonds; ace, queen, 10 of clubs; king, and jack of spades.

The dummy held the 4, 3, and 2 of hearts; jack, 9, 4 and 2 of clubs; 9, 8, 7, 5, 4 and 2 of spades, and no diamonds.

The leader held the king and 6 of hearts; ace, king, queen, 4 of diamonds; 7, 6 and 3 of clubs; ace, queen, 10 and 3 of spades.

I was playing third hand and held ace, 8 and 5 of hearts; 9, 7, 6, 5, 3 and 2 of diamonds; king, 8, 5 of clubs; and the singleton 6 of spades. The score was, dealer and dummy, 6; leader and partner, 16. The dealer declared hearts.

Here was a hand in which there was only one correct opening — the king of diamonds. Not one good player in a thousand would have opened it in any other way, and yet the

TRAGEDIES AND SURPRISES

play would have cost us the game. The dealer would have ruffed the king of diamonds in the dummy, come over to his queen of clubs, ruffed another diamond, come over to his 10 of clubs, ruffed another diamond, come over to his ace of clubs and then made three heart tricks — a total of nine tricks or twenty-four points and the game.

The worst possible opening of this hand was certainly the king of hearts and yet it was the one opening that could utterly defeat the dealer and score game for me and my partner. Now it happened that my partner *meant* to lead the king of diamonds but he carelessly pulled out the king of hearts and played it instead. When he saw that it held the trick he went on, (by a sort of inspired stupidity) with his low heart, which I took with the ace. At this point I led my third heart as I thought my partner must have a good reason for the trump lead. Incredible as it may seem we gathered in three diamond tricks, two spades and one club, which, with our two heart tricks, made for us two by cards and the game. Here is a difference of

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

five tricks saved to the leader by a preposterous, careless and altogether inexcusable opening.

I am reminded of another extraordinary hand that was recently played at the Turf Club in London and that caused an immense amount of discussion among bridge players. It was an instance, in actual play, of how a wrong lead sometimes helps the leader and his partner.

The dealer had left the make to dummy, who had declared no trumps, with the singleton king of clubs; king, jack of diamonds; ace, king, eight of hearts; ace, king, jack, ten, eight, seven, and four of spades.

The leader held ace, queen, jack, six, five, three of clubs; nine, two of diamonds; seven, five, four of hearts; and six and three of spades.

Third hand held seven, four, two of clubs; ace, queen, ten, eight, seven, six, three of diamonds; jack, ten of hearts; and two of spades.

The dealer held ten, nine, eight of clubs; five and four of diamonds; queen nine, six,

TRAGEDIES AND SURPRISES

five, and three of hearts; queen, nine, and five of spades.

Here is a hand — the leader's — that should always be opened with the queen of clubs, as it lacks an entry card in another suit with which to get in and make the clubs. The ace is a wretched opening, and no sound player would think of so opening the hand. This leader, however, was not a careful player, and he opened with his ace, which dropped the singleton king in the dummy. After the leader had made his six clubs, he allowed his partner to take seven tricks in diamonds, or a matter of a grand slam. Had he opened his hand *correctly*, that is, with the queen of clubs, the dealer and dummy would have made one club trick, five hearts, and seven spades, or a grand slam. In other words — play rightly, and you lose every trick; play wrongly and you win every trick.

To digress a little, I must give an example of how players sometimes confuse, in their own minds, their bad luck and their lack of skill. This instance came to my attention a short time ago when Messrs. H., F., B.,

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

and W. were playing an afternoon rubber at the Knickerbocker Club in New York.

The dealer left it to dummy, whose hand was as follows: Clubs: ace, king, queen, jack, 5, 3, 2. Diamonds: king, jack, 7. Hearts: 8. Spades: 9, 3. The dealer held the ace and three small diamonds, four small hearts, four small clubs, and the lone king of spades. The leader had five hearts to the jack, three small spades, three small diamonds, and two small clubs.

Dummy looked at his hand carefully and declared "no trumps." It seems that he had meant to say "clubs," but he was pouring out a cup of tea and smoking a long cigar and giving an order to a servant, so that he had become confused and inadvertently said "no trumps." Third hand doubled, on the ace, king, queen of hearts, the ace, queen, jack, 10, 8, 6, 5, of spades, the queen and two small diamonds and no clubs. Dummy redoubled, still thinking he had made it clubs, and third hand said "enough."

As dummy laid down his hand he remarked to the third hand: "I don't see what

TRAGEDIES AND SURPRISES

you doubled on, I have every trump in the pack."

"Trumps?" screamed third hand.
"There *aren't* any trumps. It's *no* trumps!"

A confused discussion then arose and it was finally decided that as the dummy had clearly said "No trumps," the make must stand, but, for some obscure and fanciful reason, they agreed that it should stand at twenty-four per trick and not at forty-eight.

The leader led the knave of hearts and third hand overtook with his queen. At this point if third hand had played his ace of spades, as he *should* have done, he would have made ten tricks, doubled, or ninety-six points. Instead of doing so he led his queen of spades, in order, as he naively said, to "fool the dealer."

The lone king of spades of course held the trick, after which stroke of luck the dealer proceeded to make seven clubs and four diamonds, or twelve tricks — one hundred and forty-four points — besides twenty for the slam and one hundred for the rubber.

This stupid play actually occurred and ac-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

tually cost the leader and third hand twenty-three dollars each, at five-cent points, or forty-six dollars for the two. After it was all over, third hand of course blamed his luck most roundly and almost abused his partner for not holding the king of spades. The whole hand was an extraordinary one, and, while the dealer and dummy had begun it by feeling a sense of impending disaster, they finished it in a whirl of good nature and elation.

I remember another very amusing instance of a mistaken declaration. This occurred at the Racquet Club in New York a few years ago, and Mr. D. was the hero of the episode. After looking carefully at his hand Mr. D., the dealer, declared hearts. He had meant to declare clubs, being twenty-four on the rubber game and having six clubs in his hand, but his mind was wandering and some demon of perversity had made him say "hearts." Before he had even realized his blunder the leader had doubled. Mr. D. tried meekly to explain that his call had been made in error, but, after a mild protest from his adversaries, he finally accepted the inevitable with the

TRAGEDIES AND SURPRISES

easy grace and good nature which have always characterized his play.

His hand was as follows: Ace, king and two small diamonds; three small hearts; six clubs, to the jack, 9; no spades. Dummy went down with four hearts to the queen; two small diamonds; seven spades to the jack; no clubs. The leader held ace, king, jack, ten of hearts; ace, queen, 10 of spades; king, queen, 10 of clubs; and queen, 9, 6, of diamonds. Third hand held king, 9, 7, of spades; ace and three small clubs; two small hearts; jack, 10 and two small diamonds.

The leader, feeling pretty confident of a "killing," led the king of clubs, probably the most correct opening of the hand. The dealer smiled an ample smile and proceeded to business. When the slaughter was over the dealer had ruffed three clubs in dummy, as well as three spades in his own hand; he had made his ace and king of diamonds, and had ruffed the third round of diamonds with dummy's last trump, making three by cards or forty-eight points. This was, of course, a phenomenal distribution of the cards, but

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

it actually occurred and the leader was left, at the end of the holocaust, grimly clutching his four good honors in hearts, while everything else had been ruthlessly swept away from him. Had the leader, in this hand, played three rounds of trumps — an irregular thing to do, to be sure — he and his partner would have won three by cards instead of losing them. It seems almost incredible that so poor a collection of cards as was held by the dealer and dummy could have won three by cards against such a battery of aces and honors as was held by the leader and third hand.

The gentleman who played this hand is an exceedingly clever player, but he has a very great fault and one that is a common one among many fine bridgers. In most respects his game is without a flaw, but he has an insane desire to “steal” tricks, that is — by craft, by waiting, by double finesses, by silly leads, and by false-carding, he *sometimes* gains a trick or two. His joy when such tactics succeed is so great that he manages to lose sight of the countless tricks he has, in the meantime, lost by such Macchiavellian wiles. I once ventured to express to

TRAGEDIES AND SURPRISES

him my disapprobation of his style of play. My remark nettled him greatly.

"Look here," he said, "Mr. Dalton recently contributed to the *Strand Magazine* a very enlightening article on the absurd blunders which he had seen at the bridge-table, during his long career as a player. Now, you are a writer, aren't you? Well! why don't you write a few articles for some American magazine on the blunders which you yourself have committed at the game? No one that I know is better qualified to write about bad bridge than you are, and, just think of it, you could go on writing the articles for *years*."

Now, I freely admit that I rarely play an evening without making blunders — that is a part of the fun of bridge — but I consider that the straight and normal game will win more tricks, in the long run, than the methods employed by my cunning friend.

Speaking of tragedies and horrors at bridge reminds me of a truly terrible thing which once befell my friend, R. F. Foster, at the Knickerbocker Whist Club in New York. It is really one of the saddest stories

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

of blighted bridge hopes that I have ever heard. It was Foster's deal and he picked up the ace, queen, and eight of clubs, the queen and four little diamonds, no hearts, and five little spades. He left the make to dummy who declared hearts on the six top hearts, the king and three little clubs, no spades, and the ace, king, jack of diamonds. The leader, Mr. McDonald, led the jack of clubs, and Mr. Foster, seeing the two hands, and without playing from dummy, spread out his hand on the table and remarked: "Grand salammbo, unless somebody has seven hearts in one hand." Foster could safely count six heart tricks, five diamonds, and three clubs, or one trick more than the grand slam. The leader, a little mournfully, admitted the disheartening truth of the claim and Foster began to score up 292 points — 56 below the line and 236 above for five honors in one hand, grand slam, chicane, and rubber. After gazing thoughtfully at Foster's cards, third hand — Mr. Gilhooly — protested that he could not quite see a grand slam in the hand and politely begged Foster to follow, in the dummy, to Mr. McDonald's

TRAGEDIES AND SURPRISES

lead of clubs. Dummy played the king of clubs and Mr. Gilhooly promptly trumped it and led one of his five diamonds which Mr. McDonald trumped quite as promptly. The slaughter went on until the leader had trumped three diamonds and third hand had trumped four clubs. They looked at the six top hearts which were left shining brightly in dummy and modestly said that they would be satisfied to rest from their labors, merely scoring the odd trick and — as they were 24, on the rubber game — rubber, and permitting Foster to score his five honors and chicane. Had Mr. Gilhooly, the third hand, held *any* club, it would have actually made a difference of 304 points — in Mr. Foster's favor — in the score of the rubber.



CHAPTER XII

A TEST HAND — USEFUL IN DISCOURAGING THE BOASTERS

THERE is, I know, a popular fallacy that beginners always win at bridge and poker. It is, of course, undeniable that wretched players often hold better cards than perfect players, and that a lucky distribution of the hands will sometimes favor them, but to suppose that the odds are always in favor of the beginner would be nothing but the sheerest madness. If a beginner wins at bridge,⁶⁸ we are so struck by the phenomenon that we fail to remember the hundred or so instances in our experience where the beginner has been soundly beaten.

Nothing can be more amusing, for a careful player, than to watch the antics of a beginner at the bridge table. Certain fundamental and universal errors, common to all tyros, he is bound to commit, of course, but

A TEST HAND

he is also certain to exhibit other vagaries, purely individual and personal in their nature.

We suppose that ninety percent of the bridge players in the world regard a trick in trumps as having a greater value than a trick in a plain suit. It is astonishing to see how carefully most players will play their trumps. They must lead them from the right side, at the right time, and they must be careful about leading a high card, perhaps, to coax a higher card from the adversary who is to play after them. Infinite pains over the trump suit, and, nine times out of ten, no pains whatever about the plain suits. This is only one of the thousand or so follies of the poor player.

Another deep-rooted folly is the way in which average players fail to pay any attention to the fall of the cards on the first trick or two. Along about trick seven, they begin to think with a vengeance. One would suppose that they were intent upon some abstruse problem in fluxions or calculus, when, as a matter of fact, there could be no doubt whatever as to their next play, if only they had paid

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

a little heed to the cards that were played to the first trick or two.

Here is a very simple example: The leader opens the two of clubs, in a heart hand, from queen, 10, 7, 2 of clubs. Dummy goes down with the king, 6, 4, 3 of clubs, and rushes up with the king of clubs, which third hand takes with the ace. The dealer plays the 5. Now, why has the dealer rushed up with dummy's king, second in hand? Obviously, because he, the dealer, has only one club and this is his desperate chance to make a trick in the suit, on the assumption that the leader *may* have led away from the ace. A little thought, therefore, will show third hand that the leader is left with the queen, 10 and 7, and a similar amount of attention should show the leader that his partner must and can only hold the jack, 9, 8. The dealer, as the two was opened, can place the leader and third hand with three clubs each, unless the two was a singleton lead, in which case the leader has no more clubs and, if the leader has no more, third hand must have six. Here, owing to dummy's play of the king, second in hand, the dealer has practically declared that he

A TEST HAND

has but one club, and yet how few players will take the trouble to make even so simple a deduction as this. Almost every play in bridge is charged with meaning. Everything is an inference, while some of the inferences are moral certainties.

There are, roughly speaking, five kinds of bridge players. Let us classify them, as follows: (1) Idiots; (2) butchers; (3) tinkers; (4) artists; (5) necromancers.

In many hands two idiots, playing together, will make as many tricks as two necromancers can make. In one hand in every thousand they will make *more*, but in, say, ninety out of a hundred, they will make anywhere from one to seven *less*. These subtle differences between players are interesting; let us pursue them farther. For purposes of comparison we shall arrange a hand that can be played in a variety of ways. A hand something like it was arranged, years ago, by R. F. Foster. I have forgotten his exact hand, but the following resembles it, and will very well answer our purpose. Let me see any two people attack this hand and I shall very soon tell you to what class of players they be-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

long. Let me urge my readers to deal out the hands, before reading the rest of this chapter, and ask two of their friends to carry out a sham battle with them, as it were. Do not let them see all the cards, of course, but simply ask them to play their hands, against the dealer and dummy, as carefully as they can. The result in tricks will place them in the class to which they rightly belong. The cards are distributed as follows:

Z. Dealer: Ace, queen, jack, 9, 2 hearts; 8, 7 clubs; 9, 7 diamonds; 10, 9, 8, 5 spades.

A. Leader (to the left of the dealer): 10, 8, 3 hearts; 3 clubs; ace, king, 10, 8, 5 diamonds; queen, 7, 6, 4 spades.

Y. Dummy: King, 4 hearts; jack, 10, 9, 2 clubs; queen, jack, 6, 4, 2 diamonds; ace, 2 spades.

B. Third hand (to the right of dealer): 7, 6, 5 hearts; ace, king, queen, 6, 5, 4 clubs; 3 diamonds; king, jack, 3 spades.

The score is one game all, 24 all. Dealer declares hearts. How should the leader and his partner play their hands in a regular rubber, that is to say, without exposing any cards other than dummy's?

A TEST HAND

Let us see how the hand would be played by each of our imaginary classes of players. To begin with the idiots, of whom there are about ten per cent among bridge players.

The leader, A., will lead his singleton 3 of clubs, for there is — to an idiot — nothing so beautiful in all the world as a singleton, and third hand will take the trick with his ace — instead of with his queen — in order to deceive the dealer. He will then play the king of clubs, on which A. will discard the 4 of spades. B. now plays the queen of clubs, which Z. trumps with the jack of hearts. Z. takes three rounds of trumps and leads the 9 of diamonds, which A. takes with the ace of diamonds. After this, A., of course, leads the king of diamonds, and Y. and Z. naturally make the rest of the tricks, Y. getting in with the ace of spades and Z. discarding his losing spades on Y.'s two good diamonds and one good club. In other words, the idiots have lost three by cards.

The butchers, of whom there are about thirty per cent, will know a little too much to open a hand with a singleton when they hold an ace, king, suit, so that A. will open

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

the hand with the king and ace of diamonds and then switch to his singleton club. B. will make the king and queen of clubs and then will begin to think. Why should he now play his ace of clubs and "set up" the jack in the dummy? After mature deliberation, he will lead a low club, which Z. ruffs with the jack of hearts, A. discarding his second spade, having already discarded one on the queen of clubs. Z. plays over to his king of hearts, takes out three rounds of trumps, goes back to the ace of spades, and plays the jack and queen of diamonds, on which Z. discards two losing spades. Z. now ruffs the jack of clubs and surrenders a spade trick. In other words, the butchers have done a little thinking and have been rewarded with one more trick than the idiots. The butchers have lost two by cards.

Next come the two tinkers, of whom there are, among bridge players, about forty-five per cent. A. opens the king of diamonds. When he sees the three fall from his partner's hand he begins to think. B. cannot be playing "down and out"—in other words, echo-

A TEST HAND

ing — as the two of diamonds is in the dummy. B. evidently has no more diamonds, and A., therefore, plays his lowest card in the suit, so as not to lose command of it. Y. plays the 4 and B. trumps. In like manner B. will play the king of clubs, and, when he sees his partner's 3, will also pause to ruminate. He will then play a low club, so as not to risk losing command of the suit. A. will trump and return the 8 of diamonds. Y. will play the 6 and B. will trump, only to be overtrumped by Z. Z. will now play the ace of hearts, and follow it with a low heart, which he will take with the king in dummy, drawing all the trumps except two in Z.'s hand. Dummy will now play the queen of diamonds. Z. will discard a spade, and A. will take the trick with the ace of diamonds. Whatever A. now plays, the dummy can get in and, on the good jack of diamonds, Z. can discard a losing spade. Y. will also make the ace of spades and Z. will make his two trumps. Z. must, however, lose one trick in spades or clubs. In other words, the tinkers have thought a little harder than

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

the butchers, and have only lost the odd trick, or one trick less than the butchers and two tricks less than the idiots.

Let us now see what two artists would do with the hand. (We may say that there are only about fourteen and nine-tenths per cent of these highly favored beings in the world.)

A. opens the king of diamonds. Directly he sees B.'s 3, he places the whole suit. Here he pauses and thinks, only, instead of half thinking, like the tinker, he gets right down to the job and thinks hard. After mature deliberation, he plays the 10 of diamonds, forcing Y. to cover with the jack and allowing B. to trump. B. now leads the queen of clubs, followed by a low club, which A. ruffs. A. now plays the 5 of diamonds. This is a very pretty play. The 8, at first sight, looks like the better play, but Y. might not cover with the queen, but choose, rather, to play the 4, in which case dummy would be left with the queen and 6, and the leader would be left with the ace and 5, so that dummy, in order to clean up a trick in diamonds, would only have to exhaust trumps with two leads of them — taking the second trick with

A TEST HAND

the king — lead the 6 of diamonds and discard a spade in Z.'s hand. By doing this, the queen of diamonds would become good in dummy, and Z. could, later on, surely discard a spade on it. In other words, A. plans to keep a tenace over Y.'s diamonds, no matter how Y. plays.

On A.'s 5 of diamonds, Y. plays the 4. B. trumps and Z. overtrumps. Y. and Z. may now wriggle and squirm as they please, they cannot possibly make another trick in clubs or diamonds. If they take out the trumps and try to do so, A. and B. must infallibly win the odd, or one trick more than was taken by the tinkers. Just here, however, it may be pointed out that if Z. is an expert, he will, at this point, suddenly change his tactics and play for a ruff in the spade suit with one of dummy's trumps. If he is clever enough to do this and leads at once two rounds of spades, he can still make the odd trick against the artists, so that it is apparently impossible for any two players, holding the hands of A. and B., to win the odd trick, the game and the rubber.

Let us see what two necromancers would

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

do with this particular distribution of cards. (Parenthetically, we may add that of this type of player there are precisely one-tenth of one per cent in the entire bridge-playing world.)

Our imaginary necromancers would play the first four tricks just as the artists did. At this point A. is in the lead, having ruffed a low club. He is now in a position to do a little thinking. Z. must have had five hearts or more, as, with less than five and so little strength in the side suits, he would not have gone hearts. If he has six hearts to the ace, he must, with the ace of spades, go game. With any seven hearts he must likewise go game. Neither is there any hope for A. if Z. has five hearts to the ace, and the king of spades. In fact, Z. looks like a certain winner if he has the king or knave of spades. He has no more diamonds. He cannot have any more clubs, or B. would have gone on with the king of clubs, which, with the ace, is marked in his hand. A. can begin to count B.'s hand. He must have four more clubs and five other unknown cards, of which only two can, with any degree of probability, be

A TEST HAND

trumps. A.'s only chance of winning the game is to find his partner, B., with either the ace of trumps or the king of spades. If Z. has the king of spades, the game is gone. If he hasn't it, he must be prevented from ruffing his low spades in dummy. Knowing that he and his partner control the diamonds and clubs, A. leads a trump, which is taken in the dealer's hand. The dealer can now see that the jig is up unless he can ruff a spade in the dummy. He therefore leads a low spade over to the ace and goes on with the 2 of spades, at which point B. can do a little thinking on his own account. His partner is obviously anxious to have the trumps knocked together. If Z. has the queen and another spade, or the queen and two spades, the queen is bound to make, so B. rushes up with the king and leads his last trump, which dummy takes with the king. The trumps are now all out, except three in Z.'s hand. Z. can now trump one of Y.'s clubs or diamonds. Neither play will help him. Let us suppose that he trumps a club. He must now lead a spade — either the 9 or the 10 — and again A. must stop and think. He can now

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

count B.'s hand. He *must* have four clubs and a card that is almost certainly a spade, though it might, by a miracle, be a heart. If it is a heart A. is safe in passing the trick for him to ruff. If it is a spade it *may* be the jack. If it is the jack the game is won. If it is not the jack the game is inevitably lost, so A. passes the trick. When B. takes the trick with the jack of spades he has only to lead his ace of clubs, and Z. must, no matter how he plays, surrender a spade trick, the game and the rubber.

This is the way that two necromancers dissect and analyze every hand that they pick up. The above is a hand in which two good players, simply by drawing careful inferences, must inevitably win the odd trick, and yet I venture to say that not two players in a thousand will, in the ordinary course of play, play A.'s and B.'s hands correctly unless all the cards are exposed.

CHAPTER XIII

GIRLS

My friend, X., of Philadelphia, is one of the soundest bridge-players that it has ever been my good fortune to meet. He is, at times, a little critical and finicky, but his bridge is so careful and so sane that he has become an acknowledged authority on the game. He tells the following story, at his own expense, and, as it illustrates amusingly the risk of playing cards with a lady, just because you happen to admire her coloring, her hair or her eyes, I venture to repeat it with all of its author's verbal trimmings and elaborations.

"It was," he said, "at the Brighton Hotel at Atlantic City, where I had gone for a little rest and change of air. In the cheerful dining-hall there sat, at an adjoining table, a somewhat forbidding elderly lady, accompanied by quite the prettiest girl I had ever

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

seen. She was filmy and feathery and full of youth and laughter.

"I must confess that, old as I was, and, as yet an entire stranger to her, I felt myself sinking in a pleasant quicksand of admiration. I soon became an absolute victim to her infectious laughter and her challenging eyes.

"As good luck would have it there arrived at the hotel, the night before I was to leave it, a youth whom I recognized as a fellow member of a Philadelphia club. To my no small surprise it developed that he was engaged to the bright and beautiful being who had so captivated my aged fancy. An introduction was effected and the next afternoon, after tea, Bert, the lucky young hero, informed me that the 'toothless dragon,' meaning his future mother-in-law, wanted to scare up a game of bridge. I smilingly assented and was, of course, delighted to cut the blonde young 'angel' for a partner, mama falling to the lot of Bert; a windfall which he accepted, I thought, with rather bad grace.

"The angel leaned across the green table,

GIRLS

looked me tragically in the eyes, and besought me to instruct her a little in the finer points of the game, as she was fearfully rusty. 'Although,' she added, 'I have *naturally* played *cards*, at home, for *years*.'

"I advised her carefully to watch the dummy and always to lead through the strong hand, up to the weak.

"After the first hand, which she butchered with unparalleled lightness, laughter and grace, I said, very mildly:

"'Oh, partner, I wanted so to have you give me a trump.'

"Angel—pouting: 'How could you be so selfish? You had *loads* of them and I had only *one*.'

"The second hand after this she opened with the king and ace of clubs, to which I 'echoed,' that is, played high to low, in order to encourage her to risk another lead of clubs, as I could ruff them on the third round. But, alas! she switched to the two of trumps — remembering, I suppose, my chagrin at her failure to lead them two hands before — and we never made another trick, losing five by cards in diamonds and the game.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

"I ventured another mild protest.

"My dear young lady, I asked you to lead another club. I fairly screamed for it."

"Angel—in some perplexity and with just a trace of temper: 'Well, you couldn't have screamed very loud or I would certainly have heard you.'

"Hero and Angel here exchanged a significant glance, as indeed they did after the play of nearly every card. A few minutes later it was Angel's lead at no trumps. She opened the three of diamonds from the king, queen, jack, 9, 6, 3, 2. Dummy had no diamonds. I held four to the eight, and the dealer took the first trick with the ten, leaving the ace bare in his hand. I applied the rule of eleven and convinced myself that the dealer had a good deal of strength in the diamond suit. I very soon secured the lead and, after mature reflection, I abandoned the apparently hopeless diamonds. Had I gone on with them we would have made the odd trick instead of losing three by cards. After the massacre was over, I asked her, *very* politely:

GIRLS

“ ‘When you are at home you play the penultimate, I presume?’ ”

“ Angel — embarrassed and a little ashamed: “No, I *don't*. Susy plays the violin, but I can't play anything — except the gramophone.’ ”

“ After this, Angel heaped fresh indignities and atrocities upon me at every turn.

“ I felt that my cup of bitterness was about to run over. At the last hand of the rubber it was Hero's turn to deal. He left the make to the grim, maternal dragon, who declared hearts with a five-card heart suit to the ace, queen; a four-card club suit to the king, jack; a singleton spade, and three low diamonds.

“ I was the leader and Angel was playing third hand. I opened a spade and managed to put her in twice, once with her ace of spades and once with the ace of clubs, hoping, all in vain, that she might lead up to the weak diamond suit in dummy, as I held the ace, queen, ten of it, and did not like to open the suit myself. Her first lead was — I might have known it — a heart (trumps) up

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

to the ace, queen, in dummy. Her second was a little better — a club, up to the king, jack. After the hand I looked the blonde young murderess in the eye and asked her how she had managed to think of these leads.

“ ‘Why,’ she said, ‘could I have done any better?’ ”

“ I had, a short time before, wanted to shake, spank or strangle her, but her gaze of childish wonder, her trusting, serious eye, disarmed me utterly, and my wrath seemed to fold up its tents ‘like the Arabs and silently steal away.’ ”

“ ‘Oh, well,’ I said, ‘perhaps if you had remembered my instructions and led through the strong hand and up to the weak, it might have helped us a bit.’ ”

“ Angel— great astonishment and a look of triumph suffusing her heavenly face: ‘Well, of *all* things! Why! That’s exactly what I *did* do. I did it *twice*. I *knew* that Berty was the strong player and *you* were the weak.’ ”

“ What could I do? What could anybody do? ”

“ I finally decided that a little dash of

GIRLS

humor might do her more good than all the scolding in the world, and risked the following rather clumsy shaft:

“ ‘ Well, Miss A., I can only congratulate myself on two things. First, that I have had the pleasure of meeting you, and second, that you are not to be the engineer on our train to-night.’ (We were all going to Philadelphia that evening.)

“ Angel — very fond of conundrums, jigsaw puzzles, and cipher letters :

“ ‘ Why! What *do* you mean? ’

“ ‘ Because,’ I said, ‘ I am afraid that you could not see a signal if it were an inch away from your nose.’

“ Angel — all ready with a ‘ squelcher ’ :
‘ Now *that’s* where you fool yourself. Why! While you were carrying on so ridiculously about that wretched game, Berty signaled me to stop playing bridge and come out on the beach with him and I saw and understood the signal in a *flash*.’ Tableau!

Here is another tale that is certainly calculated to melt a heart of stone :

Miss Peggy H. is possessed of everything that makes life endurable to women in New

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

York society — except money. She has great beauty, a light heart, excellent family, a good position, youth, abounding popularity, a thin figure, and a fervid love of bridge whist. Added to all this she is, in her way, something of a wit. Being an exceedingly clever girl — and old and wise for her years — she soon came to the conclusion that life in New York without money was but a hollow mockery at best. Accordingly, and with a heartrending sigh, she decided to accept the oft-repeated and oft-repulsed attentions of Sigismund, the richest among her thousand and one admirers.

Now this bachelor was famous alike for the meanness of his soul and the magnificence of his fortune. His millions, they used to say, were often counted, but never spent. On such a golden tide of ducats Peggy intended to float proudly on to opera boxes, tiaras and radiant happiness. She knew that Sigismund detested spending money and that his unwillingness to “give over” was proverbial, but she felt that, once she could get him properly haltered, hitched, and checked, she could

GIRLS

coax and wheedle him into a semblance, at least, of prodigality and display.

"Just you wait until after the ceremony," she used to say smilingly to her doting mama.

A ball at Mrs. L.'s on the evening following her grim determination; a more or less inaccessible conservatory; the music of "*La Faute des Roses*"; a glass of very dry champagne, and a seraphic smile on the face of innocent (?) little Peggy was all that was needed to make the unsuspecting Sigismund propose again and, this time, slip his neck into Peggy's silken noose for the balance of his natural life.

The engagement was to be announced at a dinner given by the bride's mother. This feast proved a great success. Toasts were drunk, speeches were made, and the good news whispered by mamma, over the telephone, to the society editor of a three-cent morning paper. The groom-to-be hinted broadly to his fiancée that he had purchased the engagement ring and brought it with him to the dinner. (Suppressed excitement on the part of little Peggy!)

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

After the cigars the servants brought in the cards for bridge and, curiously enough, in the cutting, it fell to Peggy's lot to play partners with her future lord and master against an elderly married couple — friends of Peggy's mamma. Two or three ladies, who had not cared to play, drew up their chairs to watch the progress of this rubber.

As soon as it was Peggy's dummy she promptly commenced chatting with the onlookers, at which annoying evidence of her lightness of nature, stern Sigismund favored her with a solemn rebuke.

"There!" he said. "If you want something to do while I am playing this hand, look at *that*." And he handed her, with an air of great triumph, a red leather jewel box. Peggy's fingers were a little "trembly" as she opened the box and saw the engagement ring — a band of dull gold in which she beheld two diminutive and lacklustre moonstones!

She bit her lips. A rage of mortification and despair was sweeping over her, but she kept herself in check, calmly passed the box to the onlookers, gazed sweetly and grate-

GIRLS

fully at Sigismund, and said, with a sublime affectation of interest in the hand:

"Having no diamonds, partner?"

"Diamonds," said he, looking up from the cards in astonishment, "what *are* you talking about? Spades were led, weren't they?"

Alas! Poor Peggy's barbed and poisoned arrow had "gone wide."

At the expense of the girls, I may, perhaps, be permitted to narrate one more anecdote — this time a very short one. It is comparatively pointless, but it has, somehow, always amused me.

On the Sunset Limited, toward dusk, a party of Southerners were playing bridge while the train dashed on its mild way northward. One of the players was a very young and deliberate lady who took an eternity to make up her mind to play a card. During one of these interminable pauses a gentleman, who had only that day been presented to the human tortoise, leaned over the table, and in a very solicitous tone inquired:

"Excuse me, Miss S., but do you, as a rule, sleep with your feet or your head toward the engine?"

CHAPTER XIV

SUCCESS WITH BAD PARTNERS

I HAVE lately discovered an easy way to make money at bridge. As my readers have been so good as to listen to so many of my old stories I am going to take them all into my confidence. With the aid of the knowledge that I am about to impart to them, they ought to make twenty per cent more money at the game than they have ever made before.

I have been at work, for weeks, preparing a monumental guide for playing bridge with bad partners. *Everybody* has been writing books about how to play with *good* partners, but no one has seen that — as there aren't any good partners in the world, all partners being more or less bad — what we really want is a work on how to understand bad partners and not on how to understand good bridge.

Instead of avoiding, as I have in the past,

SUCCESS WITH BAD PARTNERS

the bad players at the club — hiding behind screens in the card-room, and even taking sanctuary in the barber shop when I see them approaching — I now realize that I shall probably be forced to play with them in any event and I go bravely forth and shake them cordially by the hand. As a consequence of this affability on my part and of my special and kindly method of play with them, they all hope for a chance to play with me. I am known among them as the *only* man who appreciates “really good play,” as they call it, and, as a result of this, they play a hundred per cent better with me than with any other man in the club.

Let me preface my remarks by admitting, frankly, that the scenes in a club card-room often beggar description. A card-room is a little like strong drink in that it seems entirely to change men's natures and temperaments. It makes the mild men bluster. The impetuous men become meek; the polite become rude; the selfish become generous; the cowards become brave; the brilliant men become drivelling idiots while the dull-witted grow alarmingly astute. But let the door of

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

the card-room close on their exit and — presto! — they instantly become themselves again.

What awful tumults and tortures we have witnessed, and shared in, in the card-rooms of the world. Were we to behold these scenes outside of a club, and not know the matter at issue, we should verily believe ourselves to be in some insane pavilion for incurables.

Let us view a typical afternoon scene. Clouds of tobacco smoke are everywhere; cigar ashes are on everything; spilt tea is in every tray; the gentlemen's cravats are all awry; money lies on most of the tables; the players are wildly gesticulating; waiters are bringing in fresh glasses and bottles, but never removing the "cripples," while everywhere we hear a confused hubbub of nagging and wrangling, for all the world like the chattering of angry magpies in a cage.

Shall we listen to a few snatches of the elevating conversation that these prominent bankers and lawyers and business men and gentlemen of leisure are indulging in?

SUCCESS WITH BAD PARTNERS

"Why in the deuce didn't you play your queen of clubs and save it?"

"I never had the queen of clubs. What's the matter with you?"

"Then why go on with the suit? Are you crazy?"

"How was I to know that you had all the diamonds? Am I a mind-reader?"

"Couldn't you lead one and find out?"

"I never had the lead, after you butchered the hand by trumping my spade."

"That's no reason for throwing all your cards on the table."

"Well, if you can't see a signal or a revoke, what's the use of your playing at all?"

"You chuck my money about as if you enjoyed it," etc., etc., etc.

And then, in cutting in at a table, how wonderful it is to discover that no living mortal can remember how many rubbers have been played. It seems to be impossible to find four men who can recall the number of the rubbers with anything even approaching exactitude. Here is an instance. There are exactly six men at an evening table of club

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

bridge. Six rubbers have been played, with, naturally, four players in each rubber, or a total of twenty-four individual rubbers. This is an average of four rubbers for each player. Somebody stops and you cut in at the table. Who is to go out?

Curiously enough, nobody has played more than three rubbers. One of the men is sure that he has only played two. Everybody is in doubt; a cloud of perplexity envelops them all. How singular this is! They remember perfectly well how many directors' meetings they have attended that day; how many courses they had for their dinner, and what their engagements are for to-morrow, but they'll be blessed if they can remember whether they have played two rubbers or three or four or nine or none at all.

The forthcoming work, on which I have been so busily engaged and of which I have already spoken, is to be entitled:

"Rules for Playing Bridge Whist with Beginners, Blind Cripples, Congenital Idiots, Somnambulists, Ladies of Fashion, Country Parsons, Débutantes, Trained Seals, "Natural Card Geniuses," Children Under Five, and

SUCCESS WITH BAD PARTNERS

Pupils in Bridge Correspondence Schools."

The first dozen or so rules will, I hope, convey to my readers some idea of the great importance of the treatise.

Rule 1. Remember that bad partners are — like South American orchids — endless in their variety. New species are constantly being discovered. When you think that you have plumbed the lowest depths you will suddenly run foul of a man who is in a little class of degradation all by himself. Remember, too, that you are chained to a bad partner as, shall we say, a clever man is often chained to a boring wife. Scolding and nagging are not going to rid you (or him) of the incubus. As this is an established truth, always take pains to flatter your partner grossly as he stumbles along from one morass to another. The deeper he sinks into the rank and miasmatic quagmire the coarser must be your flattery.

Rule 2. Remember that he is more than likely to lose track of the cards, not singly, but in rounds of four.

Rule 3. Having two cards in a suit, one of them an honor, he always begins to signal

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

with the honor, particularly if he has no trump with which to ruff the suit on the third round.

Rule 4. He is very fond of playing an incomprehensible card, that loses two or three tricks, and then looking inutterably wise and saying: "I was playing for a big thing, partner."

Rule 5. The four things that give him the keenest and most unalloyed pleasure in bridge are as follows:

(a) Beginning a hand, on his own deal, by ruffing a lot of losing cards in his weak hand, with the trumps in his strong. (b) Leading a suit of which both his adversaries are void, thereby enabling the weaker of the two hands to ruff and the stronger to throw away a losing card. (c) Leading a queen up to an ace, without the jack in either hand. This probably pleases and gratifies him as much as anything in the game. (d) Playing the queen, third hand — from ace, queen, and one small card — on his partner's original lead of the suit, when the king is seen not to be in the dummy. (This play he invariably calls a "finesse.")

SUCCESS WITH BAD PARTNERS

Rule 6. Remember that he never leads trumps. If he *should* start to lead them show no surprise or gratification, as the lead is merely an inadvertence. He is certain to think better of it and stop the trump lead at the very next trick, as one round of trumps invariably satiates him. Remember the saying that there are thousands of men walking to dinner parties who would be riding to them in cabs if they knew enough to lead trumps at bridge. If he refuses to ruff the losing cards of one of your suits do not jump to the conclusion that he has no trumps; on the contrary, he probably has an honor or two, but these honors look too compellingly beautiful for him to part with.

Rule 7. When he opens the three of a suit you may be sure that it is from some combination like the four and the three alone, or else from the king, queen, jack, ten, three, two. When playing against the dealer, if he should lead a king, you may conclude definitely that he has not the ace. In the same way, when he takes a trick with the queen he cannot have the king.

Rule 8. Let him take up the tricks. It

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

always gives him a little thrill of infantile delight.

Rule 9. Play as confusedly as you can or else he may find something in your play to base conclusions on — always a dangerous thing. When the butchery is over, smile at him, wink one eye knowingly, and say, with a little chuckle:

“ Partner, I think we made the most of that hand, don’t you? ”

Rule 10. Remember that you are always playing against three players — your two adversaries and your partner.

Rule 11. Never expect your partner to remember any card lower than a queen. He is not an adding machine.

Rule 12. Always return his suit at the very first opportunity in a declared trump, or he will fret and squirm himself into an alarming condition of nerves. He must have a reason for leading that suit and it will go hard with you if you don’t return it. Never mind what is in your hand or in the dummy. *Never*, at no trumps, return your best card of his suit, or he will think you have no more, overtake your card, and lead another suit.

SUCCESS WITH BAD PARTNERS

Rule 13. As he will never return your lead at no trumps it is often wiser to open a weak suit in the hope that, when he gains the lead, he will switch to that suit in which you are really strong. In the same way, he will be certain to notice none of your discards save the *last*. Try to arrange your discards in such a manner that your last shall give him the information that, with another partner, you would have conveyed by your first.

Rule 14. Never explain or point out. You will only confuse him and give yourself a headache in the bargain. Simply continue to smile blandly and ecstatically, as if you were a cat being stroked under the chin.

Rule 15. Remember that he particularly enjoys making what he calls a "fat" trick, that is, a trick with two or three court cards in it. This sort of a trick always stimulates and excites him. It also goes to his head to make a trick in the trump suit at the very end of a hand. He will invariably save his trumps until the bitter end with this unholy surprise in view.

There have lately appeared in the dailies and comic papers a great many bridge satires

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

in verse apropos of the subject of good or bad partners at bridge, but I think that I am quoting the best bridge poem that has recently appeared when I offer to my readers the following anonymous gem clipped from the pages of a metropolitan daily. It is, of course, an imitation of Wordsworth's well-known poem, "The Character of the Happy Warrior," which begins:

"Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to
be?"

THE PERFECT BRIDGE PLAYER

Who is the perfect bridge player? Who is he
Whose partner ev'ry man would wish to be?
He who, at whist once expert, now when brought
Amongst the keener joys of bridge, hath wrought
Subtle improvement in his former thought;
Who, quite unfettered by his ancient ways,
Adapts himself to circumstance and plays
As sense directs, though with a due regard
To what convention says on the discard.
The lead and declaration, quick to learn,
What knowledge can perform and yet discern
Occasions when adherence to a rule,
In theory right, in practice marks the fool;

SUCCESS WITH BAD PARTNERS

Who, doomed to play in partnership with men
Prone to declare on five hearts to the ten
Without support, dissembling all his pain
Turns the necessity to glorious gain,
And, come what will, is equal to the need,
Making his partner's wildest calls succeed;
Is placable and slow to take offense,
Mild to the rash and gentle to the dense,
Eager to praise, yet disinclined to chide,
Most smiling when he's most dissatisfied;
Is not dejected when his cards are bad,
Nor, when they're good, exuberantly glad;
Who, with a toward or untoward lot,
Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not,
Still from his hands gets all that can be got.
Plays to the score and judges from its state
When to be bold or when to hesitate,
And of two declarations makes that one
Whereby the game can be most surely won;
Who takes in calling and in doubling too,
Just the same time to say what he will do,
And never by an overlong delay
Hints what might influence the partner's play;
Who finally, though scrupulously fair,
Loses no chance of scoring, and takes care,
While he observes the rigor of the game,
That those who play with him should do the same.
This is the perfect bridge player. This is he
Whose partner ev'ry man would wish to be.

CHAPTER XV

BRIDGE IN ENGLAND

A GREAT friend of Lord Brougham's, in the early days of bridge in England, and one against whom he played many rubbers, was Lord Yarborough, whose ill luck was proverbial throughout England. He frequently declared that his cards were the most execrable in the world and that his usual luck was to find a nine the highest card in his hand. As a consequence of this a hand with nothing over a nine gradually became known in England as a "Yarborough." The expression became more general and it is to-day the universal term applied to a hand without honors. Lord Yarborough was always willing to bet a thousand pounds to one that, in any given hand, dealt in the ordinary way, there would be at least *one* card higher than a nine spot. As a matter of fact, the odds are nearly

BRIDGE IN ENGLAND

two thousand to one that a hand so dealt will contain one or more honors.

I heard of one rubber, at least, in which Lord Yarborough's ill luck forsook him. The unlucky lord was playing with his wife and two other ladies. During the course of the rubber Lord Yarborough held the most enormous cards. Lady Yarborough, who was playing against her husband, took out her purse at the end of the rubber, and, with a sad and wistful smile, declared to the ladies that, in *her* opinion, a void hand at bridge could, with much more point, be called a "Lady Yarborough." In the course of this rubber Lord Yarborough held one hundred aces twice and four honors in diamonds once.

Another friend of Lord Brougham's at that time — I will call him Mr. Cay — was, and still is, a most picturesque and lovable figure. His delightful manners at the card-table are proverbial throughout England and his skill as a player is well known. His father was the best known player of old-fashioned whist in all England, with the possible exception of "Cavendish." He is often pointed out in

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

London as the one man who never criticizes the play of a hand, but always in some tactful way tries to justify the glaring and incredible blunders of his partner.

The writer was once walking home with him after an almost all-night session, and could not forbear complimenting him upon his suavity and self-restraint under very taxing conditions.

"How, how," said I, "can you ever manage to keep your temper? Your partner fairly butchered you to-night and you never complained. Why do you make a martyr of yourself?"

He turned to me, with the early morning sun upon his face, and said:

"My dear fellow, I make money by it."

Whether he has made money by it, it would be hard to say, but it is certain that he has made a host of friends by it.

The mention of the name "Cavendish" reminds me of an anecdote in connection with him which I think is worth relating. At a certain card-club in London the members take the game rather seriously. It is played "for all it is worth," and there is little con-

BRIDGE IN ENGLAND

versation indulged in. The cards are carefully examined by the waiters, and the jokers removed from the packs before they are placed upon the tables. An American gentleman was put up as an honorary member at the club and began his first rubber by chatting and laughing in a good-natured way about the club in general and about his host — Mr. T. — in particular. “Cavendish,” who had cut against him, silently and solemnly walked to the mantel over the fireplace and returned with a printed card, which he gravely placed before the Yankee. On this card the American was amazed to read the following legend:

“Jokers will be removed by the card-room waiters.”

Perhaps the most popular bridge club in all England is the celebrated Almack's, about which club I feel that I must say a word or two in passing.

Almack's used to be, in the olden days, a fashionable dancing-club, as Thackeray has made us remember. It is now devoted exclusively to bridge. It is a proprietary club — owned by a syndicate of five people and managed by a lady and a gentleman who run

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

the club admirably and who are always about the club and most obliging about making up a rubber. The game is limited to pennies; roughly, two cents.

The standard of play at Almack's is high. The club opens after lunch and remains open until two in the morning. Men and women are both eligible. There are sometimes sixteen tables going at once, and it is not necessary to know the players to cut in at a table.

I remember a fine player there, Mr. X., who used it a good deal. He was totally blind and played with special marked and raised cards. When he left the make, third hand would declare the trump and (after the leader had played) tell him what was in the dummy and what card had been led. Then, as one of his adversaries played a card they would announce it, and without a moment's hesitation X. would call the card he wished played from dummy. He was a nearly perfect player and rarely chucked a trick.

"Badsworth," whose books on bridge are so popular in England, also played a great deal at Almack's and, although his game is not as good as it used to be, he is still an

BRIDGE IN ENGLAND

intelligent and careful player. Another delightful member there was Sir John Bonsor, formerly Chief Justice of Ceylon. Sir John was not only stone-deaf but a very great invalid as well. I remember playing many rubbers with him and having him constantly remind me about the necessary signals when I declared the trumps. If I made it diamonds, I was to point to my ring; hearts, to my heart; spades, I was to make a shovel of my hands; while, with clubs as trumps, I was to shake my fist in his face. Once, during the course of a rubber he misunderstood my club signal, and, in order to show him his error, I shook my fist at him with some little vehemence.

Later in the day I was told that I had been severely criticized — by a lady at a near-by table, who did not know Sir John's infirmity — for losing my temper with so old a man, and for shaking my fist in his face. She added that this was a *fine* example of American manners.

Perhaps, however, the most extraordinary and renowned bridge-player in England is Mr. B. R. who has come into a title in the

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

last year or so. He has no arms and plays entirely with his toes. This will, I am certain, arouse my readers to a pitch of absolute disbelief, but I can assure them that he is a well-known player and that it is the truth, and nothing but the truth. He sorts his hand — or should one say “foot” ? — on the floor, gathers the cards into suits, and flicks them upon the table with unerring dexterity. The cards are, of course, shuffled and dealt for him, the tricks gathered, the dummy manipulated, and the score marked, but it is absolutely true that he sorts his cards and plays them entirely with his feet, on which he wears very fine silk stockings.

The late Lord Russell of Killowen, although one of the most brilliant legal minds of his time and a great devotee of the game, was a very poor “bridger.” He was said to be one of the biggest losers in England, as he invariably played for very high stakes, and was never more than an indifferent player. Mr. Asquith, the present prime minister, although he has played bridge for over five years, is not at all a strong player. I have, myself, played with him on one or two

BRIDGE IN ENGLAND

occasions and have marveled at his lack of skill in a game so comparatively simple, when it is everywhere admitted that his is one of the clearest and most brilliant minds in England.

To veer a little from these reminiscences I must narrate the harrowing experience which befell a charming American lady on a recent visit to England.

She was stopping in a country house in Warwickshire and the house-party contained enough talent to make up three excellent tables at bridge. Mr. and Mrs. N., of London, were particularly strong players. Their prowess at the game was well known and freely spoken of throughout London. They had little visible means of support and the gossip was that they lived by their bridge. This hideous implication was partly borne out by the fact that they showed a marked preference for playing with each other, or, at any rate, at the same table.

As they sat down, the American lady, who expected a rather "stiff" game, was surprised to hear the English woman remark that she preferred not to play for money.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

The fourth at the table was a rich bachelor, who said that he, on the contrary, rather liked to play for stiff points. The married Englishman seemed to be of the same opinion and my friend sacrificed herself upon the altar of good manners and agreed to play "for love" against the English lady so that the men should always be opponents.

The game proceeded in regular course and my friend soon perceived that the lady from London was a surprisingly good player, so long as she played with her husband, but that when she played *against* him her game became distinctly amateurish. Every rubber that Mrs. N. played with the bachelor she "chucked" most barbarously, but those rubbers in which she had her husband as partner, she played with consummate skill.

The difference in her play was so marked that the bachelor, who was by this time in a fairly deep hole, financially, remarked that he thought he had had enough and the game broke up in an ominous silence. After the bachelor had paid his twenty-one pounds to his adversary he turned to my friend and remarked, so that the couple could not help

BRIDGE IN ENGLAND

but hear him: "Upon my soul, I have never been so rooked in all my life."

This tale prompts me to repeat that where the stakes are large, it is always advisable for husband and wife to play at different tables, and I have noticed that in London, for instance, where there is a great deal of after-dinner bridge, married couples usually prefer to split tables.

Of all the English clubs, the club stakes at White's are, I think, the highest. The regular game there is "shillings, and five pounds on the rubber." This makes the average rubber at White's about seventy-five dollars—a fairly high average for club bridge. It is fair to say that there is an occasional game at the Whist Club in New York and also at the Racquet Club, in which the stakes are higher than at White's. Last winter, for two or three months, there was, at the Racquet, a table where dollar bridge was frequently played. At the Whist Club the stakes at one particular table sometimes ran to two dollar points but the *regular* club-stakes were, of course, always a great deal more moderate. At the St. James', in Lon-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

don, there is a sixpenny table and a three-penny table. At the Turf there is nearly always a shilling game. In the clubs at St. Petersburg, Vienna and Paris, the average game is about five cents.

I should say, on the whole, that the European club games are a little bit lower, on the average, than in the smart New York clubs where the regular game is either five or ten cents. It is also true that in New York, "after-dinner" or "mixed" bridge is a little higher than in the society of European capitals. This is very natural. Americans are richer than any other people in the world, and they can well afford to play for a little higher stakes. In England the social game is usually very moderate. I have visited several English country houses where, despite the fact that the guests were people of decided means, the game was never more than farthings,—or half a cent a point.

The whole system of gambling in European clubs is better than it is on our side of the water. In London, Vienna, Paris, etc., one plays against the club and never against the individual members of that club. The

BRIDGE IN ENGLAND

club acts as a clearing-house for all winnings and losses.

For instance: I am playing at a European club. I win a rubber of ten dollars, and Mr. B. loses it. We decide to stop, so I put a white pasteboard card in the special box in the card-room for that purpose. This card shows that I am owed ten dollars by the club and is initialed by Mr. B. Mr. B. also deposits a card showing that he owes the club ten dollars and his card is initialed by me. If we play more than one rubber we merely put our net losses or gains on our cards, and do not deposit a card for every rubber. At the end of the day, the card-room steward gathers up the cards and gives them all to the card bookkeeper.

Once a week the card bookkeeper mails checks to all the winners and receives checks from all the losers. Each player's account is, in this way, balanced. At the end of the year, or, indeed, at any time, the players may look at their card accounts, on the club books and see just what moneys they have received from the club or what moneys they have paid it.

On a certain day of the week — usually

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Wednesday at twelve o'clock p. m.— all card debts for the previous week must be paid to the club. If not, the defaulting player is in a great deal of disgrace, and may even be expelled from the club; but when such cases occur, the club committee, as a rule, give the player a chance to explain and make good his error of omission.

In Austria there have actually been suicides because certain members of a Viennese club found themselves unable to settle their card debts.

In this country, on the other hand, we do not play against a club but against individuals — a very complicated and tedious system. I have won money from as many as five players in a single day. These players, perhaps, had not the cash with them and preferred to send me checks. Such a course as this enforces me to carry five figures in my head; to remember the names of the five losers and, finally, to deposit five checks. I think that all sensible players are united in hoping that the European system of play will be introduced into our American clubs.

BRIDGE IN ENGLAND

There is also a difference between English tournaments and those on our side of the water. In Almack's Club, for instance, which is a great center for tournament bridge in London, and where such things are weekly occurrences, players who desire to enter a tournament pay a guinea for admission. Besides this, they pay the usual sum for the cards and privilege — in Almack's this sum is about fifty cents. The winners of the tournament divide the prize — which is always cash.

If there are sixteen entrants, as is usually the case, the club only keeps the card (or privilege) money, and distributes the sixteen guineas as follows: The first couple each receive seven guineas. The second couple each receive back the guinea which they paid on entering the tournament.

In this country when tournaments are given at gentlemen's clubs, the course adopted is usually as follows:

Two or more members donate the prizes — gold cigarette-cases, match-safes or card-cases — for which the players contend. The

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

winning couple each take a first prize, and the second couple each take a second, if second prizes have been donated.

There is an exceedingly rich and well known American gentleman whose bridge manners are, I regret to say, notoriously bad and whose disposition is always to quarrel and find fault. On his first visit to England, he was admitted, as an honorary member, to White's Club in London, where, as I have already said, the usual club game is exceptionally good and exceptionally costly.

The American, who is a first rate bridge player, inquired if it was permissible for honorary guests to play cards in the card room. On learning that there was no rule against it he cut in a rubber with three Englishmen. The luck was at first against him, but it soon turned and he seemed in a fair way to win his first rubber.

The score on the rubber game, was 24 to 16 in his favor. He dealt and declared no trumps, on a very good hand, except that it had no protection in the heart suit. The leader asked if he might play. Third hand, who was very slow in sorting his hand, hes-

BRIDGE IN ENGLAND

itated a good deal but finally said: "Yes." The leader thereupon played the ten of hearts.

As the American thought that the leader had taken advantage of his partner's apparent hesitation about doubling, he lost his temper completely, threw the card which had been led, on the floor and said:

"Gentlemen, I don't know what *you* call this, but *I* call it mighty like collusion. One man hesitates and the other man promptly leads a heart. What am I to think or say?"

The leader looked at him as if he meant to make trouble, but third hand, Captain F. H., who is certainly one of the most delightful bridge-players in England, politely informed the American that in England a doubled no trump called for the top of the shortest suit, and not for the highest heart. Dummy then laid down the ace, queen, and two other hearts, and the American was mortified to discover that the leader was leading from king, jack, ten and another heart, and not from a short heart suit after all. The hand was played out and the American scored a small slam, as well as the game and the rubber.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

The Englishmen at this point all invented some mythical dinner engagements and left the club. This was the last rubber which the American ever played at White's. His little display of temper finally cost him the pleasure of bridge in several London clubs, as the story was given wide currency among English players.

I see that England has again been stirred by a bitter attack on bridge — this time by perhaps the best-known church paper in Great Britain. The attack is so vehement and exaggerated that it ought to be its own best answer, but the defenders of the game are rushing to the rescue like the valiant men that they are. The article declares that, for a large portion of English bridge players, the game has long ago ceased to be a pastime, and has become a passion; that theft and forgery have been the direct result of it; that bridge, unlike whist, is a gambling game, that no footman or valet can keep his situation unless he plays cards for money; that people live for bridge, and that "their souls are wilting away under this monstrous obsession,"

BRIDGE IN ENGLAND

and that only good bridge players are asked to certain houses.

“Badsworth,” that polished writer on bridge, has printed a little rejoinder in which he says :

Bridge players would heartily welcome the co-operation of the church—if they could get it—to rid bridge of its abuses, and to bring its harmless pleasure within reach of all; but they will not be pointed at with the finger of scorn as gamblers, and have their innocent amusement denounced as a sin and a monstrous obsession, from the narrow standpoint of prejudice and ignorance, without examining the position and credentials of irresponsible slanderers, who may perhaps mean well, but who certainly act unwisely.

I hasten to express the hope that the English women who take an interest in local matters; who know something of the world in which they live, and who do not wrap themselves up in selfish isolation, will extend the gift of bridge, which has brought so much light and happiness into their own lives, to those around them. In the country, a lesson in bridge now and again, and a little interest taken in the village players, would lay a foundation of much healthy pleasure, and deal a death blow to the nothing-to-do hours which so often lead to drunkenness and crime.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

I feel that this point is well taken, and I hasten to urge people who are interested in the matter to teach the game as quickly as possible to all inmates of sanitariums, hospitals, asylums, alcoholic cures, and in all reformatories and prisons where cards and card playing are allowed. I also urge prison authorities all over America to permit bridge playing among their good-conduct prisoners, as I believe that it will do more to better them and make them behave themselves than all the punishments known in our penal institutions. Thus far, bridge has been more or less confined to the richer classes. I should like to see it spread among the poor.

CHAPTER XVI

A TANGLE OF YARNS

I HOPE that my readers will not gasp when they see that they are in for another bundle of anecdotes and stories! The first of the collection is a little story which has a rather moving touch of pathos in it.

Mr. R. is one of the thousand and one professors of English at Harvard and a great reader and book-worm. He passes most of his time in his library among his books and manuscripts. Mrs. R., on the contrary, is of the world, worldly, and usually on pleasure bent. Her pet amusement is her bridge-class, which meets twice a week at her house in Cambridge. When the twelve ladies that compose it get fairly "going," the clamor is simply deafening. Outside of an aviary, or an imperfect phonograph record, there is nothing in all the world to compare it to. I chanced to be calling on

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

the professor one wintry afternoon, and we had adjourned to his study to discuss the merits of Robert Louis Stevenson, Paul Verlaine, and two unique Hoyo de Monterey cigars.

We finally opened the study door, and were dumbfounded by the roar and clatter that greeted us. The professor stood in dumb dismay. He then went to one of his library shelves and took down a very rare copy of Cotton's "Compleat Gamester," and turned to a passage which he signaled me to read.

"The game of whist," I read from the learned Cotton, "is so called from the silence that is to be observed in the play."

(I must add, parenthetically, that the opinion that "whist" means "silence" has the support of the best English etymologists.)

There we stood, facing the verbal thunder and the vocal artillery, and there, in my hand, was poor, deluded Cotton's forgotten masterpiece.

I was finally taken in and presented to some of the ladies, and it was then that I witnessed what I consider the most remark-

A TANGLE OF YARNS

able thing that I have ever seen at bridge.

One of the ladies had made it hearts, with six hearts to the ace, king. Five tricks had been played, including two rounds of trumps. Three of the five tricks had been taken by the adversaries, and two of them — the ace and king of hearts — had been taken by the dealer. These two tricks in hearts, to which everybody had followed, had exhausted all the hearts except four small ones in the dealer's hand and the single nine-spot in dummy. At this point the dealer was called to the telephone, where she remained for two or three minutes, leaving her hand, with its remaining eight cards, on the table. During her absence the three ladies at the table commenced a heated argument about the Incroyable hats "that those vulgar New York women were all wearing."

When the dealer returned from her chat over the wire with her governess, she was evidently a little flustered. After some rambling remarks about the question of governesses and children in general, she carelessly picked up the two heart-tricks in front of her, instead of the eight cards that properly

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

made up her hand. She glanced at them agitatedly, and then exposed them to the other ladies at the table, with the remark:

“Oh, well, there’s no earthly use in playing this hand out. I have nothing but trumps.”

Her two opponents first satisfied themselves that her statement was true, and then sorrowfully threw their cards on the table, with a groan about their persistent ill luck, and the game then proceeded in the usual “confusion of languages.”

Here is a delicious bridge story that is going the rounds, and that I trust may be new to my readers.

A rubber is made up of two ladies — a mother and her daughter — and two visitors, who happen to be gentlemen. The scene is supposed to be Curtis’ Hotel on the quaint old Main Street of Lenox. The ladies are very keen about the result of the game, but the gentlemen are a little bored and weary. It is sex against sex, and, so far, the fight has been fair. The mother has dealt and examined her hand very carefully.

“Oh, dear! Let me see! We are

A TANGLE OF YARNS

eighteen, aren't we, and the rubber game? Well, if I should happen to leave it to you, dear, and you should just happen to make it no trumps, and we could make the odd trick, we should win the rubber, shouldn't we? Well, I leave it to you, dear."

"No trumps," said the daughter with alarming alacrity.

"Oh, how lucky that you could make it!" said mama.

"Shall I play?" said the leader.

"Well, partner," said third hand. "'We are six, aren't we? Now, if you should just happen to lead a club, and we were just to make eight tricks, we should win the rubber, shouldn't we? Well, you may play.'"

Upon this, the leader opened with a singleton four of clubs. Dummy had three clubs to the queen, ten three; and, third hand had eight clubs to the ace, king, jack, while the miserable dealer had the lone two-spot.

After making their eight tricks in clubs and scoring up the rubber, third hand turned to his partner and observed: "Oh, how lucky that you just happened to lead me a club."

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

The scenic setting of the following story is a murder trial in a New York criminal court. The yarn runs something as follows:

Prosecuting Attorney: Are you certain that the wealthy prisoner did not visit his residence that afternoon?

Prisoners Lawyer: I am certain of it and can prove an alibi for him.

P. A.: Are you *absolutely* certain?

P. L.: Absolutely certain and I can prove an alibi for him.

Judge (interrupting): Then please proceed to do so.

P. L.: I can produce conclusive evidence to show that my client, the prisoner, was fully aware that, on the afternoon of the crime, his wife was to give a ladies' bridge party — for prizes.

Judge (solemnly): Not guilty!

There is a linguistic crime that never fails to set my teeth on edge and the authorship of which I am trying hard to trace. I allude to the detestable phrase, "I bridge it," instead of "I leave it." Can anybody throw any light on the origin of this abomination? Apropos of this there is a yarn that is so

A TANGLE OF YARNS

ancient that I doubt if it can stand soberly on its feet while I lead it out for a last sad inspection. I have heard the story in more than a half-dozen forms. The following is a composite version, and, on the whole, I like it better than any of the more familiar variations.

Mr. T., a deaf gentleman, and his wife are living, in a modest way, in Nutley, New Jersey. They are incurable bridge fiends. The unhappy wife is experiencing, with her servants, the horrors that residents of New Jersey are, as a class, so painfully familiar with. In five short weeks, the deaf gentleman has politely escorted to Nutley four Irish cooks and three Swedish waitresses. The last "incumbent of the pie portfolio," as Bill Nye used to call them, is showing unmistakable signs of fractiousness, but is still — praise be to Allah! — presiding — somewhat gloomily and with an ominous calm, to be sure — over the destinies of the little kitchen.

The T.'s, hearing that Mr. and Mrs. C., warm friends of theirs from St. Paul, are in New York, politely ask them out for a week-end to do battle with the mosquitoes.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

During the first evening a grand challenge bridge match — East against West — has just gathered momentum, when the Westerner looks at his hand and then at his partner, and says, "I bridge it." Three times the deaf host is forced to ask to have this, to him, novel remark repeated to him. When the full force of the words has finally reached him he whispers a stern and frightened reproof to his friend from St. Paul.

"For Heaven's sake, Bill, don't you dare to shout that name again. If you want anything at all ask me or my wife to get it for you. This cook is only holding on by an eyelid and the least bit of rudeness on our part is sure to start her grimly on her way."

A gentleman in Hempstead, Long Island, sends me the following story — as usual at the expense of the ladies.

"I was playing bridge in the country with my host, his wife and another lady. The women, although they were poor players, rather fancied their game. My host amused himself by winking at me and taking the four aces out of the pack. These he slipped into his wife's lap. The hand — a club — was

A TANGLE OF YARNS

solemnly played; we quitted the tricks and scored up the odd.

"My host then remarked: 'I can't for the life of me remember who had the ace of spades.'

"His wife expostulated: 'Oh, Harry, please let's have no post-mortems.'

"At the next deal he again managed to slip all the aces in his wife's lap. The hand — a doubled spade — was dealt, played and scored.

"This time it was the ace of hearts that seemed to bother my host, and he remarked: 'I really can't recall who had the ace of hearts.'

"At this his wife exclaimed: 'Well, Harry! you seem to have the aces on your brain,' to which, with an amused smile, my host replied: 'That may be, my dear, but you have them on your lap.'"

They are telling the following yarn in Canada and "Tyro," the well known Canadian writer on bridge, in the *Ottawa Evening Journal*, more or less vouches for the truth of it.

At a private house in Ottawa, between the rubbers, the hostess was remarking how

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

well Mr. So-and-so played. "Yes," said a guest, "but he's very aggravating when he hums hymns all through the game."

"What on earth," said the hostess, "does he do that for?"

"Oh," replied the visitor jokingly, "that's so that his partner can know what to declare."

"Dear me," exclaimed the lady. "Now, if he had good hearts what would he hum?"

"'As pants the hart for cooling streams,' of course."

"Well, well, and suppose he had good spades?"

"In that case," said the visitor, "he chants 'The grave as little as my bed.'"

Then a happy thought struck the hostess. "Now, tell me," said she, "what can he possibly sing when he has a Yarborough?"

"Simple, very simple," replied the joker. "He just tunes up with 'Nothing in my hand I bring.'"

Here is a diverting bridge story, told, I believe, by a Mr. F. C. in New York. I think that the tale has appeared in print but it is too curious and horrible an adventure

A TANGLE OF YARNS

not to be included in this budget of bridge anecdotes. I shall relate the story in Mr. C.'s own words:

"The other evening I was dining comfortably at a New York club with an inveterate bridge fiend, and we were amusing ourselves by comparing notes as to the most terrible tragedies which had ever befallen us at the bridge-table. I began by narrating to him the horrors of an English house-party which I had unwillingly 'honored,' and where, for three evenings, I had played double dummy, for farthing points, with a deaf hostess to the accompaniment of a full Hungarian band. I also mentioned a saddening and memorable game which I had played, very late at night — at a Newport house — where the four twos were removed from the pack and four jokers inserted in their places, these jokers all having a higher value than the aces.

"My dear boy," said my friend, the fiend, "your stories are as mild as a night in June. Prepare yourself for a tragedy more terrifying than any tale by Edgar Allan Poe!

"It was," he continued, "at the Hotel

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

Splendide-Royale in Aix-les-Bains. I was playing twenty-cent points — one franc — which is just double my usual limit. I had lost six consecutive rubbers. I had cut, each rubber, against a peculiarly malevolent-looking Spaniard, who had a reputation at cards which was none too savory. There had been trouble about him only the day before at the Villa des Fleurs, where he had been mixed up in a somewhat unpleasant baccarat scandal. He was a crafty and sullen bridge-player and I had conceived a most cordial dislike to him. To make matters worse, he had twice doubled my make of hearts and had twice scored up the game as a consequence. I contained my feeling of antipathy as best I could and bided my time.

“ Finally — it was hideously late and the card-room waiter was snoring in the service-closet — my time for revenge arrived. It was my deal, and I saw at a glance that I had dealt myself an enormous hand. I could hardly believe my eyes. I held nine spades with the four top honors, the bare ace of clubs, the bare ace of hearts and the king and queen of diamonds. Here was a

A TANGLE OF YARNS

certainty of eleven tricks at no trumps, and very possibly, twelve or thirteen. I looked at the Spaniard, whose turn it was to lead, and smiled exultantly.

“ ‘No trumps,’ I said, the note of triumph quite perceptible in my voice. Quick as a flash the Spaniard had doubled — and quick as another I had redoubled.

“ When, however, he had jacked it up to 96 a trick, I hesitated, but of course went at him again with 192. ‘Ah, ha!’ I said to myself. ‘Mr. Bird of ill-omen, you are my prey, my chosen victim for the sacrifice.’

“ The price per trick had soon sailed up to 1,536, and I ventured to look at my partner. He was chalky white about the gills and his eyes seemed to stare idiotically into space. His agonized expression prompted me to say ‘Enough.’

“ Suddenly I had a terrible feeling of alarm. Had I, perhaps, mistaken the queen of diamonds for the queen of hearts? If so, my king of diamonds was bare and the mysterious Spaniard might run off twelve fat diamond tricks before I could say ‘Jack Robinson.’ With a sinking heart I looked at

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

my hand again — all was well! The queen was surely a diamond. I looked at the olive-skinned gentleman from Spain and begged him to lead a card. I felt a great joy welling up within me. Revenge — soo-eet r-r-revenge.

“At this moment the Spaniard led a card. I looked at it nervously. As soon as my eyes beheld it my heart seemed to stop beating. He had opened the ace of a strange green suit; a suit which I had never seen before; a suit all covered with mysterious figures and symbols. I felt strangely giddy, but discarded one of my beautiful spades. I looked at my partner who was the picture of despair. He said, mechanically and as though life had lost all beauty for him, ‘Having no hyppogryphs?’ to which icy inquiry I answered in a strange, hissing whisper, ‘No gryppolyphs.’

“The Spaniard followed with another green card, a king, this time, and again I played one of my priceless spades. The leader smiled a mahogany smile and proceeded to run off his entire suit of thirteen green cards. He then scored up a grand

A TANGLE OF YARNS

slam, the game, and a rubber of 10,450 points, or \$2,090. I felt my brain reeling, and then and there fainted away with my head on the card-table. Soon, however, I thought I felt the Spaniard tugging at my coat-sleeve. My anger at this was beyond all bounds. I opened my eyes, prepared to strike the crafty foreigner in his wicked face, and saw — my servant standing by my bed with my breakfast-tray in his hands and my bath-robe on his arm."

CHAPTER XVII

IN SOCIETY

THERE is an amusing story which illustrates the hold that bridge whist sometimes gets on its devotees in fashionable society.

During a recent yacht-race at Newport, Colonel J. J. Astor took out a party of friends on his steam-yacht, the *Nourmahal*. In the party were the late Commodore Kane and some enthusiastic yachtsmen, as well as a few feminine bridge lovers.

These latter promptly sat down in the lower cabin, and began challenging the goddess, Fortuna. As the magnificent sloops jibed around the first mark, the Commodore put his head down one of the hatches and shouted: "They are turning—they are turning!"

His remark left the bridge-players quite unmoved, and there was, in the vulgar parlance of the day, "nothing doing." Lunch-

IN SOCIETY

eon was soon announced, and immediately after this the card-tables were brought out for a renewal of the contest. At the finish of the yacht-race, which was a close one, the Commodore, thinking it a pity that so fine a race should altogether escape the ladies, again begged them to come above, and added: "It's a wonderful finish — you really *must* see it." Again a tense silence from the cabin and again the Commodore was in despair.

The ladies missed the finish, of course, but, finally, when the race was over and the gigs, full of the guests, were approaching the yacht-club dock, some friends on shore called out excitedly: "Who won? Who won?" To which one of the ladies shouted back: "Oh! Alice did, of course! She held every ace in the pack."

There is so much rubbish talked about the very high gambling at bridge among women in society and the evil effects of it that I often wonder where and when all these vast sums are won and lost. According to the Sunday newspapers, society is a legalized gambling-hell with no limit to the stakes. Everybody is risking a fortune on

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

the turn of a card. "The Newport leaders" are selling their houses; "prominent society women" are committing suicide; "wealthy clubmen" are cheating and being driven out of country houses; and the "smart set" is full of wailing and impoverished women, who have lost their fortunes at fashionable bridge-parties!

But this is not all. Drinking, according to the supplements, goes with bridge, and cigarettes go with drinking. The ladies *must*, therefore, be heavy smokers and drinkers. In short, bridge has ushered in an entirely new code of morals, and, solely on account of it, we have returned to the follies and extravagances of the Roman Empire under Caligula and the dissolute court at Versailles under *Le Grand Monarque*.

The pulpit has taken up the scent and we have been treated to a wonderful series of sermons on the evils of card-playing. Doctor Rainsford, from his pulpit at St. George's Church, New York, was the first to expose the terrible evil. He drew a lurid picture of an impoverished young lady in New York who was overjoyed because she had won six

IN SOCIETY

hundred dollars at bridge in a single hour. Now, this story is ridiculous on the face of it, as, in order to accomplish this marvel, the poor young lady in question must have played as high as dollar stakes — points which a poor young lady would, we think, hardly venture to play.

The good Doctor evidently thought that bridge was, like roulette, a game of pyramid profits where a stake might be multiplied hundreds of times in a minute. Bridge, as everybody knows, is nothing of the sort. It is a game where a stake may be won or lost only after the completion of a rubber — say, twenty-five minutes; and, unless the stakes are inordinately high — which, in society, they are *not* — such gains as these are absolutely impossible.

The late Doctor Huntington at Grace Church followed Doctor Rainsford's lead, only, instead of observing the old Hoyle rule of "second hand low," he drew a still more terrifying picture of a wealthy young man who was ruined and utterly impoverished by bridge. (We cannot help wondering whether Doctor Rainsford's poor young lady was the

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

chosen instrument of the undoing of Doctor Huntington's rich young man!)

Here the misconception in the Doctor's mind was, evidently, that the game resembled Wall Street. It might suddenly take a bad turn, and, if the margin were not sufficient, the original investment could easily be lost ten or twenty times over. This idea is also, of course, absurd.

Now, the plain truth about "society" bridge is that people play for what they can afford. Everybody in it respects the man or woman who says frankly: "I can only afford penny points," or five-cent points, or whatever the individual's limit may be. Bridge may be a waste of time; it may keep people away from more important affairs, but to say that a love of playing bridge for money connotes anything like a lax moral sense is, of course, preposterous.

As to smoking! It is true that very many women in New York society smoke cigarettes. If they didn't they would be totally unlike the women in English society or in the society of Spain, Greece, Italy, Russia, Hungary and other European countries.

IN SOCIETY

As to drinking! There is practically *no* drinking among the women in the smart society of New York. They may drink a little with their meals, but that is all. The reason for this is, possibly, that it is considered decidedly common and vulgar. Fashion has more to do with regulating our conduct than we like to believe.

"But," I hear some astute reader remark, "if the fashionable, bridge-playing women of New York do not drink, *why* is there a siphon in your frontispiece?"

Well, there *is* a reason for that. To be truthful, Mr. Fancher, the artist, detests the game, as I remarked in my preface, and this was his underhanded method of dealing a blow at the game's devotees. That is the real answer to the question propounded by my reader. *Mr. Fancher's* answer, however, was so disingenuous (when I asked him this very question, by letter) that I am almost ashamed to print it. He said that (1) The picture composed better with the siphon than without it, as it balanced the dog. (2) It is only a siphon of vichy, after all. There is no other darker and more profligate bottle be-

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

side it. (3) The models were not New York ladies. They were Parisians (Mr. Fancher is in Europe) and not at all like the simple, righteous folk who play the game in New York.

All this discussion of virtue and morality is seemingly irrelevant, but bridge has been blamed for so many evils that I trust my readers will excuse this heated little digression from my theme.

A very natural and a very happy result of playing bridge in society has been the abrogation of rules and penalties. Certain rules are still, of course, observed. The penalty for a revoke is enforced; a misdeal must be dealt over; but, in mixed bridge at fashionable houses, nearly all other rules are allowed to go by the board. Indeed, in the smartest gentlemen's club in New York to-day the rules are seldom even referred to.

This is as it should be. The game is, after all, purely a diversion. You are presumably playing with gentlemen — men whose standard of honor and behavior is sure to be high. They will never try to take advantage of you. Rules are made to prevent cheating and un-

IN SOCIETY

fair play, but in a lady's house or in a gentleman's club such things are impossible, and, as a result of this nice feeling among well-bred people, rules are considered unnecessary. Players are naturally expected to know the conventions of the game, but a strict enforcement of a penalty is seldom met with.

Let us take an example. Two gentlemen are playing with two ladies. One of the ladies has dealt, looked at her hand and carelessly declared hearts, having no hearts in her hand and six diamonds. Would any gentleman care to insist upon her original make when she suddenly discovers her error and explains it to her adversaries and partner? The rule is that the make stands, but who would enforce it?

Why should a lady not lead out of the wrong hand, or touch the cards in her dummy? She cannot be doing this with any idea of cheating. It can only be an error. She may be corrected, but she should not be penalized.

This matter of a wrong heart declaration reminds me of a little anecdote connected with a Mr. B., a well-known "ladies' man"

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

in Washington. His impressive manner, his handsome face, his subtle gift of flattery, and his romantic nature made him, wherever he went, extremely popular with the ladies. (One of his victims assured me that he had the manners of Prince Demidoff and the assurance of Jesse James.)

He was dining in Washington at Senator D.'s. The dinner was given in honor of Miss X., the beautiful niece of the then British ambassador. This lady had just arrived from England and was known to be a very brilliant bridge-player. She had, however, no sense of humor and took the game a little too seriously. Rumor even went so far as to hint that she was the least bit keen about her gains and losses.

As soon as our Adonis sat down at dinner his eyes rested with favor upon Miss X., who sat directly opposite him at table but who was an absolute stranger to him. Never, he thought, had he seen anybody so beautiful — so worthy of a brave man's love. After the cigars he asked to be presented. His opening was something to the effect that he had been unable to eat his dinner because of the

IN SOCIETY

perverse and diabolical witchery of her eyes. She interrupted this little verbal bouquet by asking him if he played bridge, to which he replied that if he could be sure of holding the queen of hearts, etc., etc.

"Never mind all that piffle," she said, a little tartly.

After this body-blow they sat down at the green cloth table with two friends and cut the cards for partners. Ten-cent stakes were agreed upon, and Adonis cut Miss X.

Rolling his eyes in a most dramatic fashion, he remarked that he was doomed to be defeated. The God of Love had so befriended him in the choice of a partner that the God of Chance was now certain to treat him shamefully.

"Would you mind dealing?" was Miss X.'s icy answer to this florid sally.

He finished the deal, but, before so much as looking at his cards, he leaned over the table and said dramatically: "I declare hearts. With such a partner they *cannot* lead me wrong."

He then picked up his cards and found that he had dealt himself an absolutely worthless

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

hand, with only one low heart, four low clubs, six low diamonds, and the ten, nine of spades. The leader promptly doubled and led the king of hearts. Miss X.'s dummy went down with five honors in diamonds, three small hearts and five high spades.

Adonis was a trifle dismayed but continued to smile affably at his partner. "There can be no disaster," he seemed to say, "when love like ours has blazed the trail."

After the murder was over and the leader had taken six heart tricks and six clubs, and scored up a small slam, Miss X., with a decidedly peeved expression and a slightly acid tone, remarked:

"Mr. B., this is bridge — not a kissing-game. I suppose I like a compliment as well as most women, but your twenty-dollar sample is quite enough for to-night."

I recently chided a fashionable woman for her devotion to bridge. Her answer was really illuminating.

"What else can one do? The wives of the poor have so much to occupy their minds and hands — washing, ironing, cooking, making clothes, dressing their children, and

IN SOCIETY

working in a sweat-shop; but I, alas, can't perform these humble labors; they are all done for me. My husband leaves at nine and returns at six — what am I to do during that eternity of time? I'm too fat for tennis; I'm afraid of riding in motors; the "beauty" doctors won't allow me to eat; my husband refuses to permit me to flirt; if I lie down and rest I feel myself growing perceptibly fatter; cigarettes make me giddy; the current novels are all idiotic; my children are at boarding-school, and so, my dear friend, I am literally *forced* to play bridge. Bridge is the rich woman's sweat-shop. We are driven to it by a cruel, inexorable fate, just as the poor are driven to their sewing-machines. As a matter of fact, I *hate* the game. I *never* play without being urged and — why, here comes the Grandolets for tea. How lucky! Now, we'll have some nice quick rubbers before dressing for dinner. Hurry up — ring for the table and the cards!"

We must give such fair devils as this their due. We must try always to remember that these blessed society ladies of ours are the most circumspect and moral women in any

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

large capital of the world. They may be idle, extravagant and artificial, but they are well behaved and take their boredom with fortitude — and without the kindly assistance of some dashing male. Let us remember, too, that bridge may help to train their intellects, tact and judgment. It will, perhaps, cultivate their powers of observation and calculation — as far as such a thing is possible with mere ladies.

Boswell once pointed out to Doctor Johnson the merchants in the city, who were grubbing and grinding and sweating their lives away with no other purpose than to amass money.

“Is it not a terrible spectacle?” cried Boswell.

“Sir,” remarked the pompous fat man, “men are seldom so worthily employed.”

In like manner when a bitter critic holds up his hands in holy horror and points to four society women glued to the bridge table, as they add up the honor score — with only a trifling error or two — and dexterously deal the cards with those sensitive, jeweled, taper-

IN SOCIETY

ing, manicured fingers of theirs, I am tempted to restrain him gently and exclaim:

"Sir! I prithee, forbear! These exotic and wayward beings are rarely so powerless to do us a mortal mischief."

It has been said that when a young man plays an excellent game of billiards it is a proof of a wasted youth. Most ladies of fashion play a good game of bridge. Can this possibly indicate that our society women ought to have more to do, more interests and tastes with which to fill up the chinks of their luxurious leisure?

Should their house parties be *all* bridge? Should not music and art and books and gardens be allowed *some* opportunity of beguiling them — as well as the cards?

House party bridge! Heavens! What memories those words bring back to me. On the whole I am inclined to agree with the Frenchman who took me aside at a large house party and said: "In my opinion, it is too terrible, this sort of thing. The players are, as a rule, either telephoning, or pouring tea, or receiving visitors, or playing the

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

pianola, or forgetting the trump, or quarreling about the stupidity of their partner, or gossiping about some of the characters of the countryside, or, worst of all, forgetting to settle their account on departure."

I once heard a New York lady of fashion talking to a sympathetic neighbor, and, as her conversation was enlightening, I shall quote a portion of it.

"Honestly," she said, "I rue the day that bridge was ever invented. It has absolutely wrecked the lives of four of my daughters — the youngest of them. People talk about the pitfalls of drink and cigarettes! What rubbish! These evils may do harm to some people, but their dangers are as nothing to the ravages which bridge has wrought upon my poor darlings. As you know, my dear, I have seven daughters — all of them sweet, attractive and sympathetic. The three elder girls were less good-looking than the other four, and yet they all married, and married *well*. Their husbands are prosperous; their children are strong; their lives are full of interest and promise. But the other four are still on my hands."

IN SOCIETY

"How do you account for it?" said her sympathetic neighbor.

"How do I account for it? Why, bridge, of course! The beastly game wasn't known to the older girls. The consequence was that they spent their time sensibly and profitably — in flirting, dancing, fitting, visiting, going to the opera, and promenading the Avenue with young men, as all well-bred girls should. I brought Margot out in ninety-eight — result, one broker. Claire had a wonderfully brilliant season in nineteen hundred, and what is more, she has a corporation lawyer to show for it. In nineteen two my dear little Esmé made her *début*, very quietly, as, at that time, we were in mourning for my husband (her father, you know) and yet, with all her handicap of black dresses and small dinners and sitting in the back of opera boxes, she was calmly working away like the beavers or those wriggling coral creatures, and building up a great career for herself. What happened? She was married in St. Bartholomew's. Her husband simply idolizes her and frequently leaves his comfortable club before seven o'clock simply to be

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

with her a little before the children go to bed and before the motor comes to take him out to his business dinners."

"Oh, well, the others will marry, too, you may be sure."

"Marry! Not a bit of it! They don't *want* to marry. They prefer to belong to bridge clubs and to sit glued for days to those wretched green tables, calling out: 'I make it without hearts,' 'I declare a Yarborough,' 'I'll raise you twice,' 'I'll go it without the dummy,' 'double slam,' and other idiotic remarks of that sort. I tell you that the game has utterly unsexed them. They wouldn't know how to flirt if they were to get the chance. They are inhuman — lacking in every feminine attribute. They can't even pass an evening sensibly in a conservatory."

"Only the other day I said to Fifi: 'Play bridge if you *must*, but don't play it *all* the time. Ask that Archifeller boy to come and take you to walk, or to have tea with you, or see the animals in the Bronx, or even to go to a moving picture theater,' but it was all useless! She prefers bridge. Just think of it!

"She is forever sending the servants for

IN SOCIETY

the card table and the whole satanic paraphernalia of bridge. I'm not joking, really. I'm deadly serious! It's a great expense to keep four girls with large appetites and an unholy passion for bridge."

Whether or not this heart-breaking narrative was a little colored by the fretted mother in the telling I am unable to say, but it is certain that bridge in New York has, in many ways, revolutionized society. One proof of this is the admission, into the politest circles, of men who would never be tolerated there were it not for their skill at the card table and their willingness to play for fairly high points.

I have often been amazed of late to see how politely certain vulgarians are treated by the most sensitive, refined and charming women, simply because of their prowess at bridge.

While I am on this subject I cannot forbear relating a story which, though it sounds a little improbable, is none the less true. There is in New York a widow, who divides with a dozen other ladies the arduous work of leading its "smart" society. She is very beautiful, very accomplished, very rich, and

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

very much sought after. A month or so ago she found that she had a free evening at home and decided, in the afternoon of the same day, to ask in enough people for dinner to make up two tables for bridge.

Now, it must be explained, before we go on with our story, that this sort of dinner in New York is usually arranged *in part* by the butler.

When the butler is told that madame needs, let us say, three extra men to complete the revel, he rings up all of the lady's utility bachelors, or "nomads," either alphabetically or in the order of his personal preferences, and, if he is in luck, he may bag a brace before he has called up a dozen names.

On this particular occasion, however, the butler's luck was very bad. He had been told to secure two bachelors, but he had gone through the entire list of twenty deadheads and had been ignominiously skunked except for one "old reliable" who was never invited anywhere else and could always be depended upon to appear at any revel, eat heartily, join in every burst of laughter, and stay until the bitter end. The butler went

IN SOCIETY

to madame's maid and begged her to inform her mistress that he was "one whole gentleman shy." The maid listened, disappeared, and shortly returned.

"Madame says to telephone and ask Mr. Henry Gray, on Fifth avenue. Tell him it is most important and madame implores him surely to come."

To the butler Mr. Henry Gray was an entirely new "nomad." He looked in the printed telephone book; saw Mr. Henry Gray's name at seventy-five Fifth avenue; connected with the gentleman by wire, and unctuously delivered the message:

"Mrs. A. Luvveley Creetcher desires to know if you will dine with 'er at arf hafter hate this evenink."

"Yes, sir; Mrs. Creetcher."

"At 'er residence, sir, three 'undred hand seventy-two Fifth havenoo."

"I couldn't rightly say, sir, but she says it is very himportant and she 'opes as 'ow you will chuck everythink and come, sir."

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

"Quite sure, sir. She mentioned your name most particular."

At about twenty minutes before nine Mr. Henry Gray was announced in Mrs. Creetcher's cream and gold drawing room. He was the first to arrive and found his hostess in a Louis XIV chair, alone, before a cheerful fire.

As my intelligent readers have doubtless already surmised, the gentleman was the wrong Mr. Gray. Instead of looking up into the wistful eyes of the tall, thin, elegant, pale, cultivated, mournful Henry Gray — our former secretary of legation at London, but now a nomad with chambers at the corner of Fifth avenue and Forty-fourth street — she found herself shaking hands with the ruddy, plump, genial and perspiring Henry Gray, manager of the Vulcan Nickel Range Company, of Syracuse, with showrooms on the corner of Fifth avenue and Fifteenth street.

Mr. Gray saw that there was some mistake.

"Your servant said it was very important, so I came."

IN SOCIETY

"Listen," said the beautiful lady. "I shall be hideously frank with you. I meant to ask another man, but it was so good of you, an absolute stranger, to come, that I insist upon your staying. Will you do it to oblige me?"

"Why! Really, you're very kind, but I —"

"Mr. Gray! Let me interrupt you. Do you play bridge?"

"Can a kitten drink milk? But, really, I don't think I ought to stay, as I realize now —"

"Mrs. Fuller Frille hand Mrs. Tyson Tweedale," announced the pompous butler.

At about nine o'clock the guests all sat down to dinner.

Mr. Gray, who had been presented to everybody, was in fine feather and told several "good ones." After dinner a terrible thought occurred to the hostess; could Mr. Gray really play bridge? His answer — something about kittens — had been enigmatical, at best. There were only seven if he couldn't, and two tables of four if he could. Mr. Gray reassured her on this point.

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

"What — can I play bridge? Why, I eat it with a knife and fork."

The inevitable tables were sent for and it soon became evident that Mr. Gray was a wonderful player; full of dash, imagination, intuition and daring. The ladies were delighted with his game. Rarely had they seen so brilliant a partner — he was so good-natured, too, and so cheerful and kind.

Mrs. Creetcher decided that she would say nothing about the little misunderstanding in identity to any of her guests. Mrs. Tyson Tweedale, in particular, was so careful about meeting "outsiders," it would never do to tell *her*. The joke at her expense would resound and reverberate all over New York. Silence was wisest, after all.

Mr. Gray is to-day a great diner-out. His game, his stories, and his good nature have made for him a comfortable place in New York society.

The other evening I was watching him play at Mrs. Tyson Tweedale's. He was joking and telling stories as usual, when his adversary dealt and left it to dummy, who

IN SOCIETY

declared no trumps. Gray was the leader and picked up the following hand:

King, jack, 9, 3, of spades; queen, 9, 7, of hearts; king, jack, 6, of diamonds; ace, jack, 2, of clubs.

Dummy's hand when it went down, consisted of the queen, 8, 2, of spades; ace, king, 5, of hearts; ace, 10, of diamonds; king, queen, 10, 9, 6, of clubs.

Mr. Gray and his partner were ten, and their adversaries were twenty-two, on the rubber game. Gray had led the three of spades; dummy played the eight; third hand played the ten and the dealer played a low diamond.

Third hand had applied the rule of eleven and had seen, at once, that the dealer must be void of spades, as the dealer's subsequent discard of a diamond proved. Third hand now returned the four of spades and Gray, without an instant's hesitation, and still chatting happily with the onlookers, played his nine, allowing the queen to make in dummy.

This does not, at first, seem like a phenomenal exhibition of skill, but, considering everything, it was one of the cleverest and

THE BRIDGE-FIEND

quickest plays I have ever seen at the bridge table. If my readers will stop to calculate they will see that Gray could easily have caught the queen in dummy by playing his king on the second trick and then leading the jack, but such a play would, later on, have hopelessly blocked his partner's spade suit (with the 9) and he could then be sure of only four spade tricks, whereas, by allowing the queen to make in dummy, he was certain of five spade tricks, as his partner was marked with six in the suit. In three seconds Gray had apparently noted the following facts:

(1) He could make five spade tricks by allowing dummy the second trick in the suit. (2) His partner could have no possible entry for his long spade if the suit ever became blocked. (3) There was no lead that dummy could make that would wreck his, Gray's, hand. (4) By unblocking his partner's spades the rubber could certainly be saved and probably won, whereas by blocking it the rubber might be saved, but not won. His mind seemed very quickly and easily to grasp all these things as he continued talking good-

IN SOCIETY

naturally to the bystanders. As a result of his cleverness, Mr. Gray won his two by cards and the rubber.

THE END.

3477-3





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 028 145 343 9